

**An evaluation of English language lessons in Greek state secondary schools**

**Niki Elefteria (Elni) Rigas**

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### **Declaration**

I hereby confirm that this thesis was composed by myself and the work is my own.

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## **Abstract of thesis**

This study is a classroom-based evaluation of the teaching of English as a foreign language in Greek state lower-secondary schools. It investigates the apparent dissatisfaction that exists with regard to the quality of English language teaching in public schools. It focuses on 'macro' aspects of the social context, that is, the contextual variables that shape and affect the teaching process, and examines the 'micro' features of classroom interaction in order to capture an inside view of how teaching takes place, how the participants construct their classroom reality and how they react to it. The study has a comparative dimension in that data from German secondary schools is matched against the data obtained from the Greek context, to allow for and exploration of similarities and differences and to facilitate the evaluation process.

Three kinds of data were collected and analysed: a) non-participant observation and audio recording of 11 lessons, b) field notes, supplementary documentation on the ELT curriculum and teaching materials and c) 95 interviews of pupils and teachers whose lessons were observed. The lesson features that were analysed include: classroom climate and management strategies, role relationships, classroom activities, interaction patterns, the focus of verbal interaction, the use of the target language, teachers' questioning practices and pupil participation. The data analysis was chiefly qualitative.

The research findings indicate that in the Greek state schools, the socio-emotional atmosphere, aspects of classroom management and role relationships work against the teaching-learning process. Also, the structure and content of the lesson plans as well as the degree of exploitation of the target language appear to be inflexible and uninspiring. Moreover, it was found that the participants' attitudes towards the English lessons and their own evaluation of ELT in state secondary schools is generally negative.

The state of ELT in Greek state schools appears to have been influenced by historical and socio-political factors which bear upon the Greek education system as a whole. It is maintained that a constellation of factors are responsible for the ELT situation in Greek state classrooms, including educational development and tradition; problems of accountability; the place of ELT in Greek society; the status of English in the curriculum; the problems of ELT curriculum implementation; inadequate teacher training; pessimistic teacher attitudes and low pupil expectations.

Recommendations are made which, if seriously considered, may lead to an improvement of the ELT situation in Greek state schools and a more successful implementation of ELT policy.

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"It is good to have an end to journey towards  
but it is the journey that matters in the end."

Ursula K. Leguin

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## **List of Abbreviations**

CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
EFL	English as a foreign language
ELT	English language teaching
FL	Foreign language
IL	Interlanguage
L1	First language (mother tongue)
TL	Target language
AT	Accommodation theory
FCE	First Certificate in English
CPE	Certificate of Proficiency in English
App.	Appendix

## CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

The stimulus to work on this thesis originated from personal impressions of the English lesson in a Greek secondary school which was, and to this day still is, referred to as "*playtime*" or "*the children's hour*". I can recall sitting in one of the side desks in a classroom of about 30 pupils and looking up at the teacher who is going through a grammar exercise, while most of the classmates around me are flagrantly pursuing their own agenda: scribbling on their desks, giggling and chatting, play-fighting, throwing items at each other, writing the homework set for other subjects on their knees. Though this situation occurred very often and was more or less viewed as the 'normal' state of affairs, I was intensely puzzled by it, even somewhat disturbed. Having come from another school environment where, as a rule, order and diligence reigned in the classroom, the tumult that I witnessed seemed unfathomable. This study has provided me with a unique opportunity to step back into that world and look for answers to some of my questions. It has enabled me to probe into the life of the English language lessons and to gain a better understanding of how and why things happen the way they do.

### 1.1 Scope and aims of the thesis

The scope of this study is the teaching of English as a foreign language in Greek state lower-secondary classrooms. On the grounds that a comparative dimension can deepen the understanding of a particular object of investigation (Boyes & Spiliotopoulou-Panagiotou, 1993), the classroom data collected from the Greek schools is compared and contrasted to a sample of lessons observed in German state secondary schools<sup>1</sup>. The study involves an exposition of the contextual features of the two educational settings and an investigation into the actual teaching process, with a view to conduct a formative evaluation of the Greek English Language Teaching (ELT) program. The central variables taken into consideration for this purpose include: the school context, teachers' and pupils' characteristics, classroom interaction, and teachers' and pupils' perceptions of their English lessons.

The aim of this thesis is to obtain insights into the quality of foreign language education in Greece by looking into the pragmatic educational conditions and what happens in the classrooms themselves, so as to assess the teaching situation and to endeavour to explain the current state of affairs.

## **1.2 Structure of the thesis**

The thesis consists of eight (8) chapters, with a Reference section and a separate volume of Appendices. Chapter One presents the reader with an account of the scope and aims of the thesis and a statement of the problem. Chapter Two provides a review of the literature on educational evaluation. This is followed by the literature review on classroom interaction in Chapter Three. Chapter Four sets the theoretical background to the study with particular reference to the education systems and foreign language provision in the countries where the research was undertaken. Chapter Five is concerned with the design of the study and its implementation. Chapter Six consists of the empirical study, where a full descriptive account is given of the lessons observed. Chapter Seven brings together the various strands of this investigation in the results of the analysis, it examines the original research questions in the light of the results and presents the main findings. Finally, Chapter Eight provides recommendations for improvement and the conclusion to the study. The Appendices contain copies of all the materials used in the data collection and analysis.

## **1.3 Significance of the study**

A formative evaluation which attempts to describe and understand the teaching process, the external forces that shape and affect it, the nature of interaction within the classroom, as well as the teachers' and pupils' behaviours and their attitudes, is potentially a very useful means of providing information for modification and development (Ellis, 1990: 90). I am not aware of any other piece of work which looks into the cluster of variables that are examined in this study, i.e. the influence of a variety of external variables on the teaching and learning process, how teachers and pupils carry out their English lessons, what their expressed attitudes are, what they

perceive as being the quality of their language lessons and what the perceived and actual value of the FL program is. Hence, the significance of this thesis is that it attempts to provide concrete feedback on the workings of contextual and process variables upon ELT classroom practice in Greek state secondary schools.

#### **1.4 Statement of the problem**

##### **ELT in Greek State Schools**

English Language Teaching (ELT) in contemporary Greece is based on the active involvement of two parties, namely, the state and private sectors (public schools and foreign language institutes). Both strive to dominate within the educational sphere in an endeavour to cater for a great public demand for English language education and serve both individual and national interests.

On the one hand, ELT in the private sector emerges as a large, thriving industry presumed to have 'uplifted' and 'democratised' foreign language education by making it accessible to pupils from all types of socio-economic background. To date, it is estimated that there are over 5000 ELT *frontistiria* (private language institutes) nationwide, functioning as an essential support to the official state school curriculum, with a steady intake of clientele and around 50 000 employees (Jones, S., personal communication). The allegation that *frontistiria* play an important role in Greek society as a necessary and accepted alternative to state English language education is supported first and foremost by agents operating within the private sector, as can be seen in a number of sources of public documentation. For example, Koutroulis, the former General Secretary of the Panhellenic Federation of Language School Owners in Greece has stated that:

"the foreign language is not taught adequately in the public schools. Our branch has come to cover the weaknesses of the State and that is why it has advanced. ...if the state schools did their job well, no-one would go to a *frontistirio*." (in Spyropoulou, 1992: 5)



Put simply, it is maintained that private as opposed to public school instruction enables the mastery of foreign languages in Greece. The 'unofficial' stance of educators, parents and pupils alike, is that the private institutes serve the educational needs of the pupil population more satisfactorily than the schools do (although the private sector is not without its share of problems, as will be shown in Chapter Four, §4.3.6.2). Statements echoing this view and, at the same time, sustaining the existing poor reputation of state FL education surface repeatedly, especially in the educational press: *"One cannot rely on the knowledge pupils have gained at school in order to claim that they know a foreign language well"* (Marseilles, 1993: 6; Mitakidou-Kokkoni, 1992). Indeed, these claims point to a clear differentiation of status attached to the state and the private educational arenas. There appears to be a symbiotic relationship between them which is marked by a dynamic antagonism.

Contrariwise, spokespersons from the state ELT sphere choose to see the provision of ELT in state schools in a positive light. In the context of a formal interview, the head of one of the Athenian schools I visited, refuted the question of inefficiency of ELT in state schools by arguing that the combined efforts in both state and private sectors have had positive effects on school practice:

"At this point in time... the staff who teach are very well prepared. They have completed postgraduate studies and attend seminars, therefore...[they] are prepared and specialised. So, the [English] lesson cannot be taught inadequately. We should also note that most of the pupils come to us already having knowledge of English [from the *frontistiria*]"... (Skourdoubi, interview, March 1994).

Likewise, school adviser Diamantidou, responsible for East Attika and the Aegean Islands, believes that ELT is on a promising path and is expected to improve significantly once plans to arrange classes according to ability levels come into effect in all schools:

"This perception [that English is being taught inadequately in state schools] has been wrongly cultivated. ... Where we have levels (i.e. in 30% of the schools within this school adviser's area of jurisdiction) the grades are representative of pupil performance, and the work done is good, and the pupil does not need to go to a *frontistirio*. One example is *Anavryta*, an experimental school. For the rest of Greece, we are trying slowly, slowly to enforce the levels... (interview, May 1994).



Yet, from other corners within the state sector, claims regarding ELT carry a certain pessimism, as can be seen in the printed abstracts of academic round-table discussions, where questions on the quality of FL education in the State sector have been raised. At a meeting held by the Department of English Language and Literature of Athens University (1991), school advisers, professors of the University, and teachers of English in state schools came together to discuss the problems of English language teaching. A number of disheartening comments were made, such as the following by Kakouris, the president of the Panhellenic Association of State School Teachers of English:

"....Our education is undergoing a crisis and....the teaching of the English language could not escape from this crisis. Despite the positive steps that have been taken in the last decade for the improvement of the conditions of English language teaching in the public sector, I do not think that the situation is any better" (Athens University, 1991: 23).

Teacher representative Tselenti described the situation as one where a negative attitude towards innovative teaching approaches is nurtured; where the majority of teachers remain insufficiently updated; and where pupils display passivity and indifference towards learning the foreign language at school (Athens University, 1991).

Commenting publicly on the teaching of English in primary and secondary schools, the EFL adviser for Northern Greece predicted that it is *"doomed to failure"* and declared that inappropriate teaching material, insufficient timescales, bad teacher training and lack of continuity between the curricula for primary and secondary education, make him *"melancholic about state educational provision"* (Kalaitzidis, 1993: 11). Similarly, school adviser Tsinouka, responsible for the Peloponnese and Ionian Islands, pointed out that despite greater support of innovations in ELT, increased access to teacher in-service training and improved teaching material, there is a widespread lack of faith in the state system, which is amplified by the general public acceptance of the *frontistiria*:

"Foreign language education has certain negative features, which it has been carrying for years. Basically, I believe that parents do not entrust FL education to the teachers of the public schools. They entrust FL education, for better or for worse, to the *frontistiria* or the various institutes" (interview, April 1994).

Clearly, the two sectors are attributed a status difference which reflects the broader community's differing assumptions and expectations concerning the function of state schooling and *frontistiria*. Recent research shows that an *"unpopular image and status of ELT in Greek public secondary schools"* largely prevails (Karavas-Doukas, 1995: 63) and is said to be brought about by a predisposition of indifference, *"a lack of commitment"* at the school level where, put crudely, *"no-one bothers"* with teaching and learning performance (Jones, S., personal communication).

Such impressions openly suggest that there are persisting weaknesses in the conditions under which FL teaching and learning takes place in the Greek state schools. Certainly, this is neither a novel nor a unique phenomenon. The precarious position of modern languages in the school curriculum can be seen in other countries too. A case in point is the United Kingdom, for example, where not too long ago modern languages were accorded an exceptionally low status in the public schools (though otherwise considered an essential subject in private tuition). Time allocation for teaching in schools was inadequate, teachers were unqualified, poorly paid and with no prospects of promotion. As a result, foreign languages were *"viewed contemptuously in the schools as frivolous, undemanding pastimes for inferior intellects"* so that 'idleness' was more common in modern language lessons than in any other subject (Radford, in Goodson, 1985: 208). Similarly, FL instruction has been problematic in one way or another in a variety of contexts (e.g. Albania, Turkey, and others) where the quantity and quality of teaching materials or the adequacy of teacher qualifications and training, etc. are likewise a cause for much concern. However, as each individual case has its own particular symptoms and needs, it is worth being investigated in its own right and improved on as far as possible.

## Research into ELT

Studies which have been carried out in recent years punctuate the complexities and controversies associated with ELT in the Greek context. In one such study Chrysochoos (1989, cited in Karavas-Doukas, 1993) concentrated on describing the learning motivations and particular learning needs of adolescent pupils in an endeavour to account for the low status of English language education in public schools. In her dissertation, Rigas (1992) touched upon the weaknesses of FL education policy and implementation in Greece, and suggested improvements in the areas of central administration, pre- and in-service training, co-ordination of teaching and assessment methods and resource provision.

The research conducted by Manolopoulou-Sergi (1992), aimed at identifying the factors which contribute to a perceived demotivating climate in the formal instruction of English. Her survey of classes in schools located within the Greater Athens area provided affirmative evidence of a persisting sense of boredom and indifference among pupils towards English at school. For the majority of informers, the *frontistiria* provided a 'real' pressure to work and inspired a greater interest in their in-class performance.

Further, a study undertaken by Karavas-Doukas (1993) documented the unsuccessful implementation of a Greek EFL innovation in the state sector, which was initiated by the dissemination of a special curriculum and textbook series that were designed in line with the Communicative learner-centred approach. Karavas-Doukas reported that the state-provided textbooks, which were written and produced by Greek linguists and materials designers in accordance with the Communicative Language Teaching approach (CLT), "*did not go down well with the teachers*" (1995: 57). Referring to the causes of the non-implementation of the innovation, Karavas pointed to the teachers' inadequate training as well as the incompatibility between the innovation and the teachers' teaching/learning theories. She also argued that the innovation did not fit well with the realities of the classroom or with the specifics of the broader curriculum.

### **1.5 Summary of the problem and principal research questions**

The teaching of modern languages in formal institutions is often considered a sore point in curriculum debates, as a discipline commonly associated with failure (Cherchalli, 1988). Greece seems to be one such similar case, where there seems to be a dissatisfaction with English language education in public schools. In the Greek context, ELT is hitched to a double harness: state schooling and private institutes. Whereas private English lessons are a 'must' on the extra-curricular agenda, at school English is considered a trivial pursuit whose educational value is greatly underrated.

The central topic of this study, then, is ELT in Greek state secondary schools, where the criticisms concerning the quality of English language education have invoked the following general research questions:

1. What evidence is there at classroom level, to verify the reports about ELT in state secondary schools?
2. How does the classroom situation in Greek state schools compare with that of another context (in this case German public schools) and where do the differences lie?
3. How do the macro and micro aspects of the social context, i.e. the wider social and institutional forces as well as what happens at classroom level, affect English language education in the state sector and how can they help to explain the present undesirable situation?

## CHAPTER TWO: Literature review of Educational Evaluation

### 2.1 Evaluation in context

The act of evaluating, i.e. estimating the worth of something concrete or abstract, an object or an event, is very much a common social phenomenon. Evaluation is "*partner to all endeavour*" (Stake, 1967:160) in both formal and informal settings, permeating one's private as well as one's social and professional world.

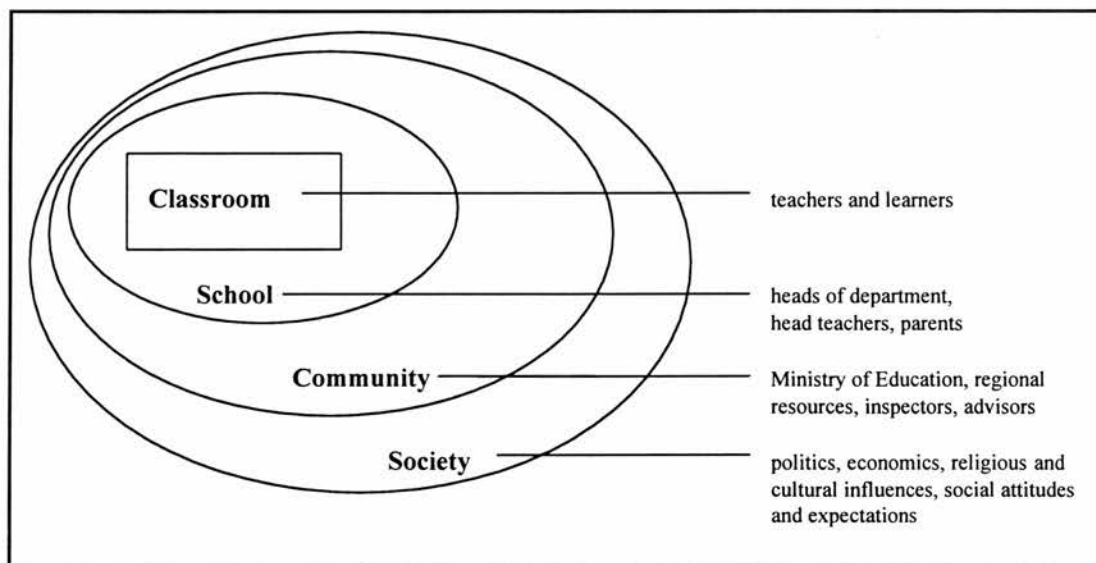
In the case of schools and educational programs, evaluation procedures are executed out of a concern about their effectiveness, i.e. how well they function or operate. Schools typically establish certain official standards which serve to determine the quality of education that they provide, and reports are kept to show how far those standards are considered to have been met. Such procedures serve as a means of accomplishing bureaucratic accountability (Darling-Hammond, 1995). Individuals too, formulate a lay opinion about the quality of the educational programs in which they are directly or indirectly involved. Teachers and pupils, administrators and parents, assess the quality of these programs by passing their own value judgements and thereby demonstrating the impact that the program has had. While this provides a significant partial indication of the worth of the educational program, it is by no means a systematic or a comprehensive means of educational evaluation. In the words of Tyler, Gagne & Scriven (1967: 5),

"A *full* evaluation results in a story supported perhaps by statistics and profiles. It tells what happened. It reveals perceptions and judgements that different groups and individuals hold... It tells of merit and shortcoming. As a bonus, it may offer generalisations." [italics added]

Indeed, a matter of particular interest in educational evaluation is to examine the impact of an educational program through a fuller awareness and investigation of the actual educational phenomena in an explicit, systematic way.

To this end, formal evaluation studies are designed to examine aspects of the surrounding context which directly or indirectly affect the object under investigation. It is taken into account that the culture of the classroom and the manner of instruction are inevitably shaped by the norms and expectations of the immediate social network surrounding the classroom, especially those of teachers, pupils, principals, parents. External agents such as regional advisers or inspectors are approached for their viewpoints, as they tend to work under the influence of the broader socio-political and economic circumstances and carry impressions of the general ideologies and expectations of the wider population. Such formal evaluations thus draw from a wide range of contexts and collect information from different sources, in order to be discerning and useful. The general contextual framework across which evaluation studies may navigate is illustrated below (adapted from Rea-Dickins & Germaine, 1992: 19).

**Figure 1: The role of context in evaluation**



Depending on its scope and focus then, an evaluation may accentuate the interrelationship between several component features of different social strata. It is often the case that evaluation findings can be interpreted in the light of the complete sociocultural and political context which embraces the environment under



investigation. The evaluation may in turn affect the context, by pointing towards ways of change and innovation, thus broadening the contribution of education to social change (Rea-Dickins & Germaine, 1992). (At this point it must be stressed that the procedures followed for evaluation studies in general education as well as the principles, approaches and methods that underlie them are equally relevant and applicable to the field of English language education).

## **2.2 Definitions of evaluation**

An evaluation sets out to elucidate a problem. As Guba & Lincoln (1981: 88) explain, the problem, also referred to as a 'question' or 'issue', can be described as *"...a situation resulting from the interaction of two or more factors (for example givens, conditions, desires, and the like), that yields*

- a perplexing and enigmatic state (a conceptual problem),*
- a conflict that renders the choice from alternative courses of action moot (an action problem),*
- an undesirable consequence (a value problem)".*

Many of the definitions provided in the literature indicate that educational evaluation is perceived as a formal problem-solving endeavour. Moreover, it is recognised as an undertaking that involves the delivery of a value-laden verdict:

- Tyler (1950: 69) views evaluation as *"the process of determining to what extent the educational objectives are actually being realised"*.
- Cronbach (1963), quoted in Nevo (1983: 118) describes it as a means of *"providing information for decision-making"*.
- Stake (1967) sees it as *"an activity comprised of both decision and judgement"*.
- According to Eisner (1979), evaluation is *"the assessment or worth of a situation"*.

- Cronbach *et al.* (1980) (in Guba & Lincoln, 1981) support a definition given by the Stanford Evaluation Consortium: "*[evaluation is] a systematic examination of events occurring in and consequent of a contemporary program, conducted to assist in improving this program and other programs having the same general purpose*".
- Guba & Lincoln (1981: 35) define evaluation as "*a process for describing an evaluand<sup>2</sup> and judging its merit or worth*".
- Similarly, Nevo (1983: 124) states that "*educational evaluation is a systematic description of educational objects and/or an assessment of their merit or worth*".
- Rea-Dickins & Germaine (1992: 5) view evaluation as "*a means analysis... intended to serve the learning process*".

### **2.3 The objects of an evaluation**

In their implementation, evaluation projects are characterised by a striking heterogeneity, as the needs of specific contexts and the ways in which they are approached differ in a multitude of ways. Equally diverse are the central objects of an evaluation, among which may be the *process* of a program (e.g. what actually happens in classrooms, whether the program is implemented in the way it was intended to), the *outcomes* of a program (e.g. what pupils learn, how their behaviour changes if at all), the *teacher-training circumstances* (e.g. whether the qualifications or experience are satisfactory, whether special preparation/skills are still needed), the *attitudes and opinions* of the participants of a program or the community's attitudes to a program, the relationship between the *cost* of a program and the *benefit* derived from it, i.e. whether the stakeholders have secured 'value for money', and so on. It is expected that investigation into these areas will facilitate decision-making on the selection, development and application of various components of an educational program.



In reality of course, it is impossible for an evaluation to cover all possible areas of content, so an evaluator needs to follow a plan focusing on those objects which are more central to the purpose of an evaluation and to appraise which aspects are more clearly identifiable, more easily observable, and how easily the stakeholders can be approached for collaboration (Alderson & Beretta, 1982).

## **2.4 Evaluation purposes**

Tyler, Gagne & Scriven (1967: 5) maintain that the broader purpose of an evaluation is expository, i.e. that it aims to "*acquaint the audience with the workings of educators and their learners*". There are, however, no fixed sets of purposes delineated for evaluation studies (Alderson & Beretta, 1982; Nevo, 1983), just as there are no fixed objects of study. Evaluation projects do not, for example, focus solely on pupil performance or teaching materials. West (1987) examined the monolingual dictionaries for non-native speakers of English in order to develop evaluation criteria for the comparison of dictionaries so that teachers and pupils could be guided in the selection and purchase of suitable ones. Mitchell *et al.* (1991) conducted an evaluation of classroom reality with particular reference to foreign language teaching, concerning the extent to which a communicative curriculum has been implemented in practice. The evaluative work of Alderson & Scott (1992) was aimed at identifying the effects of a particular approach to second language education and informing decisions on its future development.

Some evaluations provide information for administration purposes and for reasons of accountability, while others have developmental purposes and can be used for program improvement (Rea-Dickins & Germaine, 1992). Alderson (1982) maintains that evaluation projects conducted for specific purposes are more utilisable, even though the initial purpose of an evaluation may differ from the form it will eventually take in its execution. This is due to the fact that predictable or unpredictable factors such as resource availability, negotiation procedures, etc., may interfere in the course of the evaluation process and impose constraints upon its

implementation. Nevertheless, the clear identification of the object and purpose of an evaluation is a crucial part of its design.

While the purpose of an evaluation depends on the particular problem that is to be examined, a substantial number of studies aim to serve purposes that fall within the following general framework :

- To identify what effect a program has had.
- To decide whether a program has had the intended effect.
- To determine whether a program has provided value for money.
- To provide justification for a decision.
- To justify future courses of action.
- To compare approaches/methodologies/textbooks.
- To identify areas for improvement in an ongoing program.
- To show the positive achievements of pupils and teachers.
- To reduce suspicion among parents or pupils about the effect of a program  
(adapted from Alderson, 1992).

Mackay, *et al.* (1995: 309) maintain that most evaluations fall under one of three major categories, identified as "*academic research*", "*impact analysis*" or "*diagnostic analysis*". The differences between these three approaches to evaluative studies are described in terms of several distinct dimensions, namely,

- the audience in whose interests the evaluation is carried out,
- the purpose of the evaluation,
- the central variables taken into consideration,
- the methods used in gathering information,
- the criteria used to determine the quality of the findings,
- the time frame or duration of the enquiry, and,
- the applicability of the results of the evaluation.

The table below (taken from Mackay, *et al.*, 1995: 310) illustrates the key features of each type and the differences between them:

**Table 1: A classification of evaluation studies as identified by Mackay (1995)**

	<b>Academic Research</b>	<b>Impact Analysis</b>	<b>Diagnostic studies</b>
<b>Audience</b>	academic community	national bodies	individuals, e.g. teachers
<b>Purpose</b>	hypothesis testing	verification	understanding, illumination
<b>Variables</b>	theory-driven	socio-economic	those under the control of the individuals
<b>Preferred method</b>	mainly quantitative	mainly quantitative	qualitative and quantitative
<b>Quality criteria</b>	scientific	inferential	related to specific conditions
<b>Time frame</b>	months, years	years	days, weeks, months

The above categories are not considered 'watertight', however, as there may be studies that combine elements from different groups, e.g. academic research and diagnostic studies. Evaluations often also serve hidden purposes: they may justify a project, advertise it, or help to promote the careers of the individuals working on them (Alderson, 1992).

## **2.5 The functions of an evaluation**

### **Formative evaluation**

Scriven (1967) used the term 'formative evaluation' to describe the process of investigating a project or program while it is in progress. It is essentially aimed at refining and improving the *existing* state of affairs. In this sense, formative evaluation is experimental, as the program is surveyed at an intermediate stage and the information relied upon to improve certain of its areas is indefinite or partial (Stake, 1967).

## **Summative evaluation**

This term is also attributed to Scriven (1967) who employed it to make a temporal distinction between formative and summative evaluation. A summative evaluation is concerned with the effects of a completed program. It therefore focuses on the unique outcomes of the educational program and becomes a basis for decision making and action regarding its future evolution.

The relationship between the formative and summative procedures can be viewed as complementary. A formative evaluation could serve as a necessary part of any endeavour to produce sound results on a summative evaluation. Also, prior to introducing new programs older or existing ones may need to be consulted, and for this the results of a summative evaluation would be necessary and informative. The distinction between the two types of evaluation functions is primarily one that indicates where the emphasis lies in the evaluation process.

## **Operative evaluation**

Stake (1967) refers to the concept of an operative evaluation as a combination of both formative and summative. This kind of evaluation endeavours to detect both potential and actual shortcomings (or complications), and involves *"monitoring, trouble-shooting, crisis managing, the alleviation of problems that arise, [and] the making of decisions with least hurtful compromises"* (Stake, 1967: 156).

## **Psychological / Socio-political evaluation**

The function of a psychological or socio-political evaluation is to address the collective behaviour of a network of interacting individuals. It would endeavour, for example, to increase awareness of special activities, to focus on a certain kind of desired behaviour in the evaluatees, or to promote public relations (Nevo, 1983).

### **Administrative evaluation**

This is an evaluation where superiors evaluate the efforts and progress of their subordinates. Behind this supervisory procedure lies the purpose of exercising authority (Nevo, 1983).

### **Responsive evaluation**

Responsive evaluation is oriented towards the stakeholders of an educational program. The concerns, motivations, perceptions and problems of the evaluatees is central to this kind of evaluative effort. Responsive evaluation relies on description as a means of understanding the complex phenomena of the educational program, and incorporates the views of the stakeholders in its interpretations. By taking into consideration the multiple value perspectives and the positions that the stakeholders reveal on salient educational issues, responsive evaluation serves as a form of empowerment and validation of the stakeholders' experiences.

### **Democratic evaluation**

Particular emphasis has also been placed on the democratic function of an evaluation. This involves doing an evaluation which attempts to accord equal treatment to individuals, to establish a flow of information that is independent of hierarchical or powerful interests so that information may be exchanged fairly between the interested parties and as many relevant perspectives are represented as possible. The evaluator acts as a *broker* in the trading of information between the powerful and the powerless and endeavours to produce a report that is widely accessible and easily understood (SCRE, 1990).

From the above categories formative evaluation is most common, but this is not to say that it is the only correct kind of evaluation or that an evaluation cannot serve multiple functions. The function and type of an evaluation clearly will vary according to the purpose for which it is conducted (Nevo, 1983).

## 2.6 Evaluation methods

Evaluation designs are developed on the basis of the scientific (quantitative) or the naturalistic (qualitative) paradigms or by combining the two paradigms within a single study, depending on what is most useful for the case in question. An emphasis on quantitative techniques implies a reliance on rigorous numerical measurement, while the use of qualitative techniques means focusing largely on observation, description and interpretation. Below is a list of the basic features of the quantitative and qualitative paradigms as highlighted by Cook & Reichardt (1979) in their discussion of evaluation methods:

**Table 2: Attributes of the Qualitative and Quantitative Paradigms (Cook & Reichardt, 1979)**

Qualitative Paradigm	Quantitative Paradigm
Advocates the use of qualitative methods.	Advocates the use of quantitative methods.
Phenomenologism and verstehen; concerned with understanding human behaviour from the actor's own frame of reference.	Logical-positivism; seeks the facts or causes of social phenomena with little regard for the subjective states of individuals.
Naturalistic and uncontrolled observation.	Obtrusive and controlled measurement.
Subjective.	Objective.
Close to the data; the "insider" perspective.	Removed from the data; the "outsider" perspective.
Grounded, discovery-oriented, exploratory, expansionist, descriptive and inductive.	Ungrounded, verification-oriented, confirmatory, reductionist, inferential, and hypothetico-deductive.
Process-oriented.	Outcome-oriented.
Valid; real, rich and deep data.	Reliable; hard and replicable data.
Ungeneralisable; single case studies.	Generalisable; multiple case studies.
Holistic.	Particularistic.
Assumes a dynamic reality.	Assumes a stable reality.

Early evaluation studies like those of Keating (1963), and Scherer and Wertheimer (1964) were grounded on controlled experimentation and involved the monitoring of

comparison groups<sup>3</sup>. At the time, this was viewed as a good way of evaluating the merits of a particular program by determining whether educational objectives had been achieved, or by comparing the effects of different programs. Standardised tests, questionnaire surveys and other statistically analysable data were used to measure and compare pupil achievement, and were relied on to indicate differences and generalisable patterns in domains such as proficiency or reading ability. In other words, final judgements were made on the basis of scores of individual achievement or other numerical data.

Yet, the claims made for the answers that could be found and the progress which could result from experimental studies were apparently overoptimistic. Experiments and tests often proved to be biased, equivocal, or of undependable replicability and less influential than expected (Campbell & Stanley, 1963). Moreover, the condition of 'maintaining control' in line with the scientific paradigm turned out to be problematic. In the Scherer & Wertheimer case, for example, the results were pronounced 'doubtful' because of implementation complications: the treatment in the experimental group of Keating's study was not specified, while Scherer & Wertheimer were unable to administer the tests simultaneously or monitor the control groups effectively.

Increasingly, contemporary experts have come to consider that causality does not have to have priority in evaluation projects (Beretta, 1986a). Establishing whether educational aims have been achieved by means of quantitative measurement methods has become a less attractive path to follow, since in practice there is always the likelihood that objectives are modified along the way, ignored, or forgotten (McIllwraith, 1992).

It is argued that in order to assess progress in a specific domain of education we need not test learning in terms of proficiency or achievement. Knowing only what learners can do at a given time or whether they perform well or not in a controlled situation, i.e. a testing procedure, is believed to offer little insight into what facilitates learning or the process of education (Rea-Dickins & Germaine, 1992). We need to know what



and how pupils are learning, how they are being taught, and we need to process their own perspectives and judgements about their learning experience. In other words, if the need is to obtain knowledge about the quality of instruction, then it is important to find out in some detail how programs are implemented, how good the chosen materials are, what happens in the classroom, etc. The idea of 'control' in teaching and learning environments is considered expressly inappropriate because of their dynamic nature (Alderson & Beretta, 1992).

Thus, it has become more apparent that the *process* of learning is a more relevant and useful option, particularly in the case where the extent of an ongoing program's effectiveness is being evaluated. Identifying the processes which lead to successful or unsuccessful teaching and learning can best be approached qualitatively, as this avenue of enquiry is much more informative (Rea-Dickins & Germaine, 1992). Immersion and experience in the field, observation and recording of naturally occurring events, probing into the thoughts of the participants, may yield useful conclusions about what is important and pervasive (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). Indeed, the social-psychological and material environment of the teachers and the pupils (the *learning milieu*) may provide valuable insights into teaching and learning and what occurs between the participants. This approach is clearly preferable when investigating the human element and where people become the focus of inquiry.

In short, evaluation and measurement dealing with school programs or curricula and which is based solely on the quantitative scientific paradigm is believed to be insensitive to the domains of instruction and learning (Lynch, 1992), and a look at the series of definitions given in §2.2 illustrates the shift that has occurred from objective-oriented evaluation towards process-centred inquiries. However, considering that there is no one best design for investigating program effectiveness (Cronbach, 1980), the merits of the quantitative and qualitative research methods are relative and should be viewed as complementary, not mutually exclusive. Quantitative measurement can be integrated with qualitative data to various extents, depending on the evaluation situation (Patton, 1987).



## 2.7 Evaluation processes<sup>4</sup>

In order to be systematic and reliable, evaluations are designed around specific organisers. These organisers are identified as one of the following:

- (a) the objectives of an educational program.
- (b) the decisions that have to be made by the stakeholders.
- (c) the issues and concerns of the stakeholders.

### Objectives

As mentioned previously, a large number of evaluation processes has focused on the extent to which educational objectives are realised (Tyler, in Guba & Lincoln, 1981). Among the reasons given for the attention paid chiefly to educational objectives in the past, is that:

"... they were the basis for planning, ...they provided an explicit guide to teachers, and they served as criteria for selection of materials, outlining of content, development of instructional procedures, and the preparation of tests and examinations" (Guba & Lincoln, 1981: 4).

One example of an early goal-attainment model is Stake's (1967) *Countenance* model. According to this model, an evaluation should encompass description and judgement of what was intended as well as what was actually implemented in the program<sup>5</sup> (Popham, 1988). Specifically, the course of such an evaluation would involve: (i) deriving a set of intended or possible objectives, (ii) identifying situations in which the anticipated behaviours in these objectives can be expressed, (iii) testing the instruments that will check for anticipated behaviours (iv) examining the results for strengths or weaknesses and (v) making modifications in the program (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). It is a tightly-knit model which is consistent with the scientific tradition.

The interesting point about the *Countenance* model is that it draws attention to multiple components of a program: the contextual conditions, the transactions, the outcomes of a program are subjected to a detailed description and the evaluator then

proceeds to assess the interplay between these three dimensions and highlight any discrepancies between the intended standards and the observed performance in his/her concluding report.

A notable limitation of this model is that it is 'closed', in the sense that "*once objectives have been formally stated, one cannot break out from the original list to delete useless objectives or add others that may have emerged*" Guba & Lincoln (1981: 7). Further, it is held that if objectives are perceived as expressions of certain implicit metaphors, then they are not neutral: they are prescribing the expected behaviour and at the same time precluding any other findings which may be significant for the understanding of the benefits or drawbacks of a program (Eisner, 1969). Furthermore, there are no guidelines as to how the objectives themselves (especially broad, vacuous ones) are to be evaluated or how the data in objective-oriented evaluation studies is to be manipulated or controlled.

Scriven (1967) also criticised objective-oriented evaluation, thereby departing from his initial position that 'goal scales' form the basis of an evaluation. He concluded that taking intended goals as an initial springboard is likely to interfere with the quality of the evaluator's work, and is an unnecessary step since evidence of success or failure can be found simply by investigating the actual effects of the program. In his view, the evaluator should lay aside the program developer's 'rhetoric of intent', and rather relate his/her evaluation to teacher-training activities, to the process of curriculum development, to decisions about purchase or rejection of materials, to the improvement of learning theory, etc. Scriven thus became a defender of '*Goal Free evaluation*' (Alderson & Beretta, 1992), a model according to which internal components, such as classroom processes, and external ones, such as the unintended or real effects of a program, are examined instead of stated goals. He argued that any relevant goals will show up as classroom occurrences and that any intended or unintended outcomes would be more easily identified as evidence of a program's success.

## **Decisions**

Cronbach (1963) argued that if evaluation is to be effective, it needs to focus on what kinds of decisions the developers have to make and what criteria they will follow in making those decisions. For example, if the stakeholders have to decide whether to change the syllabus of a given course, the evaluation will concentrate on finding information that will help the stakeholders with their decision by analysing the strengths and weaknesses of the existing material and making suggestions. The rationale behind such an approach is that, if the main purpose is to guide the stakeholders' actions and make improvements or refinements in education, information should be sought while a program is *in the process of its development*, i.e. prior to its implementation. In Cronbach's words:

"Evaluation, used to improve the course while it is still fluid, contributes more to the improvement of education than education used to appraise a product already placed on the market". (Scriven, 1967, quoting Cronbach, 1963: 236).

This is illustrative of an approach to evaluation as a practical undertaking which is also particularistic in its orientation (Popham, 1988).

## **Issues and concerns**

For other evaluators, neither product is of interest nor comparisons attempted between the intended and the realised effects of a program. While description and interpretation (or judgement) remain the ultimate aims of the evaluative effort, evaluators have moved away from the practice of using decisions as the evaluation organiser. Rather, they have focused more rigorously on the issues and concerns<sup>6</sup> of the stakeholders.

## **Illuminative Evaluation**

One of the models that has been constructed on the basis of this organiser is Parlett & Hamilton's (1978) '*Illuminative evaluation*'. This model addresses questions such as what participants feel about the program and how it operates; what the people

directly concerned regard as advantages or disadvantages; how pupils' intellectual tasks and experiences are most affected, etc. Illuminative evaluation proceeds through three stages: (i) observation, (ii) further inquiry, and (iii) explanation. Starting with a broad, divergent inquiry, and then focusing progressively, these stages can be repeated until a clear understanding of emergent central issues is reached. Particular emphasis is placed on *multiperspective description* and *triangulation*.

The setup of an Illuminative evaluation is based on two central concepts: 'the instructional system' and 'the learning milieu'. The instructional system refers to the set of formalised plans that relate to particular teaching arrangements. Objectives are a part of the instructional system, but these are seen not as static ends, rather as a shared idea that is reordered, redefined and modified in the process of a program's development. As such, the original goals of the instructional system are not considered accurate or fixed. On the contrary, the instructional system is perceived as a scheme which is flexible and adaptable:

"its constituent elements are emphasised or de-emphasised, expanded or truncated, as teachers, administrators, technicians and pupils interpret and reinterpret the instructional system for their particular setting" (Parlett & Hamilton, 1978: 11).

The learning milieu is "*the social-psychological and material environment in which pupils and teachers work together... [representing] a network of cultural, social, institutional and psychological variables*" (Parlett & Hamilton, 1978: 11). The learning milieu differs in unique and intricate ways from one class or course to another, as various factors affect the synthesis of its organisation. Individual teachers' characteristics, pupil perspectives and preoccupations, particular constraints on the organisation of teaching and the way the school is expected to operate, etc. all have a role to play in shaping the character of the learning milieu. This milieu, in turn, affects the instructional system in different ways and, by being included in the evaluation, it can contribute to a more meaningful picture of an educational program.

## **Responsive Evaluation**

A second model that also falls within the scope of the naturalistic<sup>7</sup> paradigm, is Stake's (1967) *Responsive evaluation*, which aims to increase the usefulness of the findings to persons more directly involved in the program. Accordingly, the evaluator's primary task is to determine what the audience regards as important issues and concerns, and to provide useful information about the program in question. The evaluator collects different value-perspectives and incorporates them in reports about the success or failure of a program. In order to achieve this, s/he seeks to establish natural communication links where s/he can interact and negotiate informally with the stakeholding audience (in Guba & Lincoln, 1981). As it is issue-centred, Responsive evaluation is regarded as the most meaningful and useful type (Stake, 1975). Guba & Lincoln (1981) have also maintained that Responsive evaluation is superior to other evaluation processes because of its real concern with the audiences and because it uses the information they themselves think is important. A further advantage of this type of evaluation is that the evaluator can accommodate any of the other organisers in his/her study, i.e. decisions or objectives, if the audience points to them. Thus, a Responsive evaluation can be designed to include all other approaches. If, say, the stakeholders are interested in the merit of an achievement test, the evaluator will draw up a set of criteria focusing on test features such as grammatical accuracy or lexical appropriacy, readability of instructions, time, etc.

### **2.8 Criteria for the merit of evaluation projects**

Unlike casual or informal judgements, the outcomes of a formal evaluation have a significant bearing on the educational setting, therefore one must be careful to ensure that an evaluation is appropriate. For this reason it is imperative to draw up well-described criteria for the evaluation itself. A primary consideration must be that meaningful goals have been achieved by the study, and that the actual and potential needs of the stakeholders have been identified.



Because of the diversity of approaches, purposes and strategies employed in evaluations, the standard-setting procedures have been fairly loose. However, there is a set of commonly accepted criteria to which evaluation studies must comply. The Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (1994) has established a set of standards which comprises four major points:

- Accuracy : that technically adequate information is revealed and analysed.
- Propriety : that evaluation is conducted ethically.
- Feasibility : that evaluation is realistic and that it is exercised carefully.
- Utility : that it is internally useful, practical.

It is important not only to describe explicitly and give careful thought to what is being evaluated, but also to state the criteria by which something is judged as being adequate or inadequate. Further, a sound evaluation must be fully informed. That is to say, the use of triangulation techniques must confirm and complete the picture and evaluators should make their biases known in their reports and to argue for the particular interpretations and recommendations they offer. Furthermore, the evaluation effort must be non-threatening to its audience and must constitute a learning experience for all parties concerned (Alderson, 1992).

## **2.9 Evaluation information**

Many evaluations incorporate descriptive information which is supported by judgmental or interpretative accounts (Nevo, 1983). Evaluation procedures are not limited to outcomes or results, but incorporate a wide range of information which can be progressively narrowed down according to the particular focus of the study. The kind of information that will be collected depends on the object of an evaluation, on evaluation priorities, but also on unexpected drawbacks.

An evaluation study may come against obstacles in the process of information-gathering. As Alderson (1992: 292) points out,

"Projects are dynamic entities, constantly changing and adjusting to new circumstances, and it is inevitable that plans will themselves need to be adjusted to take account of this dynamism".

At a practical level, a major shortcoming is lack of collaboration with the stakeholders. Often, people participate 'partially' by giving some information, with half-truths rather than their real perceptions. This implies that the evaluator must try to approach his/her informants as closely as possible and use diplomacy and persuasion to collect an accurate as well as adequate data set. There is also the probability that the instruments used in the study may be obscure or difficult to respond to (Alderson, 1992). For this to be avoided, the adequacy of the instruments should be checked at a piloting phase, after which the data collection tools should be adjusted accordingly.

Other problem-areas can be those of 'bounding', 'focusing' and displaying 'rigor' (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). 'Bounding', i.e. setting appropriate limits to the evaluation plan so that the task is not approached in a mindless fashion, is one of the first tasks. The problem of bounding is resolved once the evaluator determines certain parameters which enable him/her to have a fairly clear idea of what to look for, and use those parameters to mark the limits of the inquiry. 'Focusing' refers to the process of collating all the relevant information and placing it in a specific set of categories. This is achieved by a careful analysis of the data. The problem of 'rigor' refers to the need to persuade the audience about the authenticity of the information, and the impartiality of the interpretations. This cannot be guaranteed however, because there are always limitations imposed by the samples and the measuring instruments. However, since an evaluation focuses on a dynamic context which also has unique features, the question of rigor takes on a less important role.

## **2.10 The role of the stakeholding audience**

'Stakeholders' is an umbrella term used to refer to those groups or populations who have some interest in the performance of the evaluand and are served by an evaluation (Nevo, 1983). They can also be referred to as the stakeholding audience or the evaluation clients. The stakeholders include the decision-makers and official



agents, the academic circle, the parents, the teachers, the pupils; in short, all the people who are directly or indirectly exposed to an educational program. When the need for an evaluation of the program arises, the needs of the various stakeholding populations have to be examined separately and it is necessary to decide which clients will be primarily served. Specifying the evaluation audience is crucial as this will affect the evaluator's movements, i.e. what kind of information s/he will collect, what kind of analysis will be made and how the results will be reported.

### **2.11 The role of the evaluator**

The literature identifies evaluators as 'insiders' or 'outsiders'. Insiders are those who are a part of the program and have knowledge and experience of how it operates. While they may be sensitive to the program and familiar with its reality, they may hold a biased position towards it which can 'contaminate' the evaluation task. Outsiders, on the other hand, are unacquainted with the operation and practices of the educational program, but are believed to be more impartial. They are perceived as being more objective and credible, and capable of viewing the situation from a new perspective. Their presence, however, is often intimidating for the stakeholders.

The evaluator is frequently regarded as an intrusive agent; someone who is not committed to the program; some kind of an external judge who records and checks someone else's movements and actions. This negative perception of the evaluator may bring about a negative reaction to the evaluation study itself on the part of the stakeholding audience (Guba & Lincoln, 1981).

Evaluation is itself often perceived as a threat to the interests of those involved in the evaluated program and the evaluator's mission is often seen as an invasion into private territory (Alderson & Beretta, 1992). Scriven (1967) has speculated that the suspicion shown by the stakeholders is partly due to the fact that evaluation reports have been unreliable and incomprehensible to the various audiences they have aimed to serve (in Hamilton, 1967). Thus, despite the fact that evaluation can have a powerful impact on a project by promoting its strengths and bringing about

improvements, it tends to be left out of educational planning procedures. It is therefore important that the evaluator emphasises the potential usefulness and well-meaning intentions of his/her work.

Evaluators are differentiated not only in terms of their role but also in terms of their expertise (Nevo, 1983). They are thus identified as professionals with extensive experience in evaluation, or as amateurs whose professional training is not in evaluation. As far as their efficiency is concerned, both types of evaluators can have advantageous qualities. For example, the professional will have polished his/her skills and will be in a position to work rigorously and efficiently on a variety of evaluation projects. The amateur may have lower 'technical' evaluation skills than the professional evaluator, but s/he may be more approachable and have *"a better understanding of the project's unique evaluation needs and be able to develop better rapport with the members of the evaluated project"* (Nevo, 1983: 124).

On the whole, the evaluator is expected to have sharp insight and interpretative abilities; to have technical competence in research methods, i.e. have a good knowledge of statistics or ethnographic skills (Popham, 1988). S/he should have a clear understanding of the research context and, if required, particular linguistic abilities. It is essential for the evaluator to have academic qualifications in language education and to have knowledge of or experience in programs similar to the one s/he is interested in. Of course, for those who have already embarked on a career, an established track-record of successful evaluations is highly advantageous and speaks for itself (Alderson, 1992). Further, human relations skills and personality attributes such as diplomacy and tact, integrity and objectivity, as well as organisational authority and responsibility are considered useful qualities that are well-worth cultivating in this line of work (Guba & Lincoln, 1981).

Despite the skills and advantages that an evaluator may be armed with however, the stakeholders hold a more powerful position. While the evaluator strives to obtain results that can be used and makes recommendations that can be followed, the stakeholders can in turn disagree with the interpretation of events and results

rendered by the evaluator, and choose to ignore them. Moreover, they can decide on future action regarding a program without accounting for their decisions. To maintain a balance in the evaluator-stakeholder relationship, it is useful to seek agreement through negotiation about the nature and use of the evaluation so that the efforts of both parties are respected and acknowledged (Alderson, 1992).

## **2.12 Summary**

This chapter has provided a brief account of key concepts and procedures relating to educational evaluation. Reference has been made to what educational evaluation is, how it is defined and how far the scope of its enquiry may extend. It has referred to the diversity of evaluation studies, the differential points of emphasis which evaluations may hold, and the trends or preferences in evaluation designs pertaining to the use of qualitative and qualitative research paradigms. Further, it has highlighted the criteria by which evaluations should abide and the kind of information that should be presented, and has reported on the roles of the evaluator and the stakeholding audience.

## **CHAPTER THREE: Literature review of Classroom Interaction**

This chapter presents an overview of issues relating to classroom research and classroom interaction in particular. It serves as a frame of reference that will be used to focus the evaluation enquiry.

### **3.1 The classroom as 'evaluand'**

The microcosm of the classroom is the perfect place in which to witness education in the making (Creemers, 1994) as it embodies the social, psychological, and economic forces that shape educational outcomes. All those concrete elements that define a classroom situation and determine its operation, as well as the distinctive psychosocial conditions created by the teacher and pupils, make up a complex site that offers substantial insights into the teaching and learning process. The life and climate of the classroom can bring to light the mechanics of instruction<sup>8</sup>, and by extension, the physiognomy of the educational system and its underlying philosophy. With this in mind, I consider the classroom as a crucial variable in my appraisal of the nature and quality of English language teaching in Greek state schools.

### **3.2 The communicative nature of the classroom**

In the ELT literature we are informed that the idea of '*getting pupils communicating*' has been central to the more progressive classrooms as opposed to the traditional ones, where pupils typically take on a more passive role (Widdowson, 1978a; Trim, 1983). This idea of 'communicating' is manifested in two ways: through carefully planned tasks or activities which have a communicative intent, or as part of the natural ongoing exchange that goes on between the members of a class.

The former state of affairs is central to the Communicative movement where there is a tendency to differentiate between instructing and communicating as though the former precluded the latter (Ellis, 1990). That is to say, syllabi are designed to

contain activities such as role play or dialogues that are specifically created to represent a 'real' communicative situation. Pupils are encouraged to use their acquired language skills in order to exchange information, express their thoughts and feelings; in other words to engage in meaningful communication. Such practice emphasises the development of fluency rather than accuracy of form in language learning.

Aside from such communicatively-oriented considerations however, it seems quite reasonable to contend that *"everything that happens in the classroom involves communication of one kind or another"* (Ellis, 1990: 93). Indeed, *at any point* during the course of a lesson there will be an 'addresser' and an 'addressee' exchanging messages. These messages will have a particular form and content and will serve a definite purpose, namely, wanting or needing to know something (Stern, 1992). Translated into classroom terms, it is the teacher and pupils who alternately take up the roles of addresser and addressee, and whose purpose is to accomplish the learning of a language other than the mother tongue. The content of their messages will be related to a learning task or activity (e.g. a request for information, clarification or a repetition). The medium of communication will be verbal and/or nonverbal, and the code used either the first language or the target language. Seen from this point of view, the concept of 'communicative language teaching' becomes somehow redundant (Trim, 1983).

As Allwright (1984) stresses, communication takes place anyway through the ordinary, 'typical' interaction of teacher and pupils. The various casual or unofficial communicative exchanges that emerge in the course of a language lesson are likely to be just as valuable to the teaching and learning process as the pre-set communicative tasks. While the latter may or may not be a part of classroom practice, the former is an inevitable occurrence and can provide valuable clues about the state of the learning process. It is the nature of these typical events and their effects on the pupils that are important in a study of classroom processes.



### 3.3 Definitions of classroom interaction

It seems useful at this point to clarify what is meant by classroom interaction, by considering some given descriptions and definitions:

- Hammersley (1984:100) describes classroom interaction as being composed of *"interrelated actions which are the product ... of rule following ...[and] decision making."*
- Malamah-Thomas (1987:146) defines it as *"a process in which people/things have a reciprocal effect upon each other through their actions"*.
- Chaudron (1988: 107) views classroom interaction as *"the negotiation of meaning in pupil-pupil or teacher-pupil communicative exchanges"*.
- Ellis (1990: 92) describes it as *"the process by which samples of the target language become available to the pupil for interlanguage construction..."*

Taken collectively, the above statements provide an understanding of classroom interaction as: a joint verbal and nonverbal activity involving two or more participants, who endeavour to communicate meaningful messages. In doing so, they influence each other's output and contribute (positively or negatively) to the accomplishment of learning.

### 3.4 Participation in interaction

It is by now apparent that classroom interaction presupposes some kind of personal involvement and participation. As a rule, the participation of the teacher is self-evident: s/he will initiate talk, give instructions, cues about what to say, when and how. Pupil participation is usually called for as a matter of course and is closely controlled by the teacher, although opportunities for a 'freer' performance in the FL classroom may also be given (or taken by the pupils themselves).

Upon close examination, participation structures are rather intricate. First of all, a distinction is made between *overt* and *covert* participation (van Lier, 1988). That is to say, a pupil might display active participation in a lesson by openly seeking or taking

turns or asking questions, etc. A pupil might also make private inaudible responses, listen in quietly or work alone; his/her participation in this case is covert or 'hidden'. Predictably, any visible indications of pupils expressing the need or desire to communicate are considered optimal for classroom learning (Johnson, 1995). Thus, in classroom research the different forms of overt participation are closely investigated, including examining the ways in which teachers and pupils participate, how much, how intensely, how actively, in what medium, etc. Though it is appreciated that participation may be concealed and unobtrusive, most practitioners tend to associate participation with overt actions (especially turn-taking) and concentrate on these, as they constitute prominent, clearly observable features in classroom interaction.

Further, participation can also be viewed as being *official* or *unofficial* (Hammersley, 1990). Official participation means that the pupils are contributing to the lesson 'on the teacher's terms'; they are responding to his/her nominations and elicitations and often trying to reproduce known language, to make correct formulations (ibid.). In this sense, pupils adhere to a set of rules which assist in maintaining control over classroom events. However, pupils do not always conform to these official rules. They mobilise themselves and create unofficial opportunities for participation (which may also be off-task) by giving each other information, shouting out answers, interrupting to ask questions, etc. While such activity complicates classroom interaction, it also shows how the interaction is made more functional and/or interesting, and how pupils can shape its development through their behaviour (Mehan, 1979).

### **3.5 Why interaction?**

There are a number of reasons why I consider classroom interaction worthy of investigation:

First, classrooms as social institutions tend to pass on and also reflect the social and cultural beliefs of the community in which they exist (Johnson, 1995). Classrooms



thus mirror the prevailing social, political and historical forces that have an impact on what goes on inside them. Furthermore, classroom interaction reflects the norms and values of the culture of the classroom. This concept of 'culture' is inherent to communication and interaction; it affects the behaviour of the participants and reflects their expectations and demands regarding the teaching and learning experience (Trueba, *et al.*, 1981).

Second, classroom interaction is a crucial aspect in the specific context of foreign language learning because the target language is both the subject and the medium of instruction. As language use is essential for learning, it is only through interaction that pupils are provided with opportunities to exercise their target language skills, to test out hypotheses about the language and to get useful feedback (Long *et al.*, 1976).

Third, as can be seen from the definitions of interaction, as a concept it automatically places both pupils and teachers on centre stage, to be considered active participants in classroom happenings. Most studies of classroom FL teaching and learning have until recently been correlational in nature. As such, they have largely ignored the processes of classroom instruction and have focused on input-output factors, i.e. the application of methodologies and achievement results (Mehan, 1979). However, since pupil involvement and negotiation with the teacher occurs *de facto* in the classroom, it makes sense to look at what they do in order to gain understanding of the role of interaction in the teaching/learning process and its effects (Allwright, 1980; Chaudron, 1988).

In all, an examination of classroom interaction can reveal facts about the nature and quality of teaching and learning which will enable us to become better acquainted with the practical implications of FL instruction. The section that follows below presents the theoretical base upon which the argument advocating the significance of interaction in the instruction process is grounded.

### **3.5.1 Interlanguage theory**

Interlanguage (IL) is a term attributed to Selinker (1972) who first introduced it to refer to the FL pupil's state of knowledge. The IL theory was developed specifically with the pupil's contribution to the learning process in mind. On the assumption that a pupil will acquire and control the linguistic system optimally through interaction, this theory stresses the importance of communication in the classroom.

The main claims of Interlanguage Theory are briefly the following:

- (a) The pupil possesses an innate capacity for language learning and develops a system of abstract rules that aid him/her to understand and produce language. This IL system reveals the pupil's current state of knowledge.
- (b) The pupil's IL proceeds through various stages of development, which are constantly restructured and revised. Because of this restructuring of the rules, the pupil may display inconsistencies in his/her language production.
- (c) The pupil employs cognitive and communicative learning strategies in order to build up his/her IL.

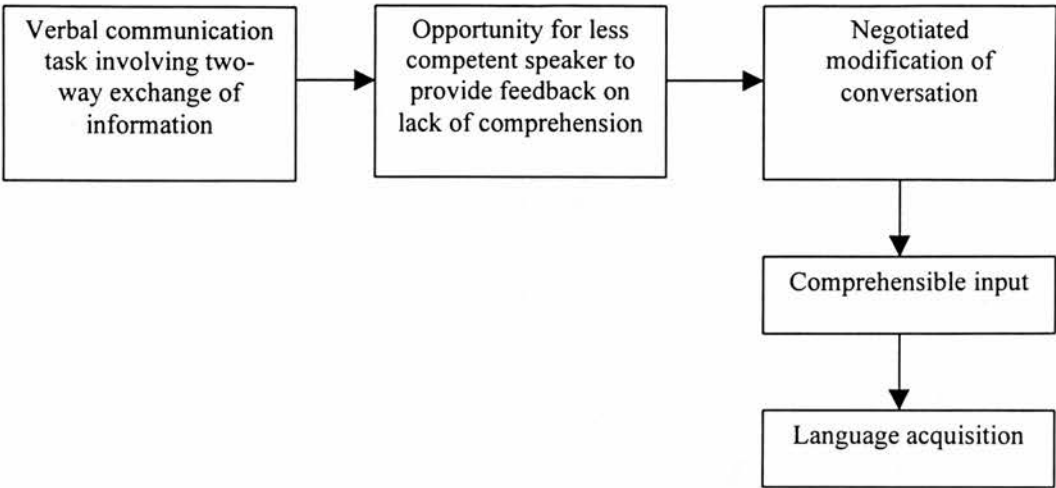
What is being suggested by this line of thinking is that classroom interaction assists learning by providing opportunities for comprehension and production in the target language. If interaction as an external factor facilitates comprehension, and interlanguage as an internal factor regulates comprehension, then interaction should play a decisive role in facilitating the development of the pupil's interlanguage.

### **3.5.2 The Interaction Hypothesis**

Further support for the value of interaction can be found in the Interaction Hypothesis<sup>9</sup> (Long, 1983c). The Interaction Hypothesis emphasises two-way over one-way communication by taking into account the pupil's involvement in the process of achieving comprehension and language production (Ellis, 1990). Long (1983a) elaborates on this point by stating that individuals who are less competent or proficient in the FL will reach an understanding of linguistic items through two-way

interactional modifications and may be better able to internalise them. To illustrate this point, he provides a diagram of how interaction may lead to acquisition:

**Figure 2: How interaction leads to acquisition:**



Clearly, emphasis is placed on the interactional nature of conversation, through which input is made comprehensible. It is anticipated that interactional modifications such as clarification requests, confirmation checks, self-repetitions, and comprehension checks, help pupils to manipulate their verbal interaction so that they can reach an understanding of formulations and meanings in the TL and achieve the ability to negotiate meaning (Long, 1983a, 1985)<sup>10</sup>.

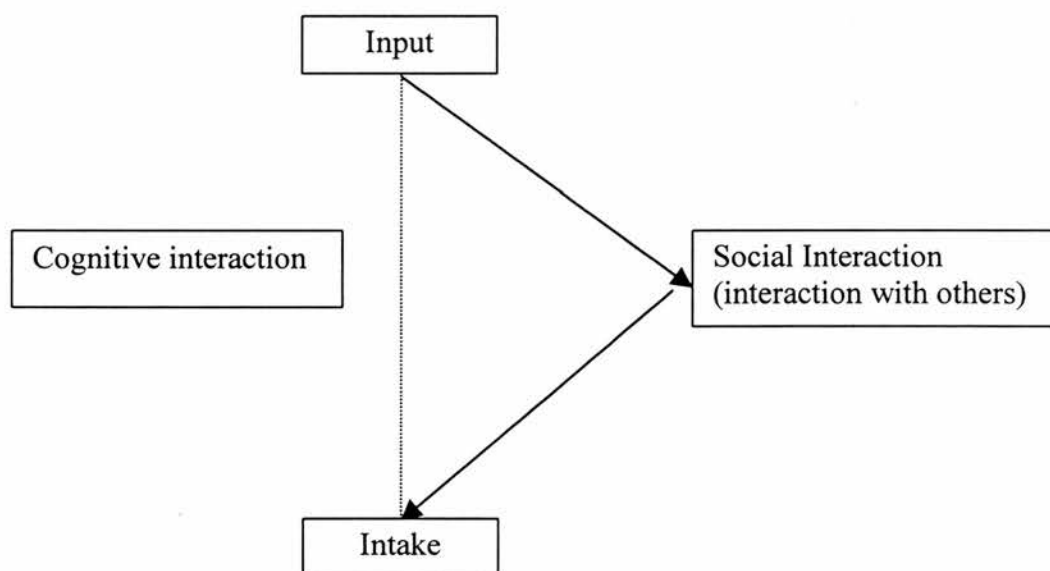
Although there is no firm evidence to show that interactional adjustments result in actual language acquisition<sup>11</sup>, there is evidence for a 'weaker' claim that they facilitate comprehension (e.g. Pica, Young and Doughty, 1987). Pica (1987) sides with the view that interactional modifications facilitate pupils' receptive and expressive capacities, but stresses the need for classroom activities that are specifically structured for collaboration and information-exchange and require pupils to focus on the manipulation of the language items.

Ellis (1990) has argued that classroom interaction can have a varied effect on the pupils by either *determining* their learning, *facilitating* it, or simply providing

instances that *trigger* learning. To illustrate, in the first case a pupil may automatically adopt and use verbal patterns and linguistic structures from the paradigms provided by the teacher. In the second case, a pupil may choose to focus on those taught items that s/he can most readily acquire, and in the third case, some learning may occur irrespective of interaction, as, for example, with the aid of memorisation techniques.

Moreover, van Lier (1988) argues that interaction strengthens the likelihood of linguistic input becoming intake, i.e. becoming a part of the pupil's innate corpus of knowledge. He offers a schematic representation to illustrate the significant mediatory role of interaction between input (language items presented) and intake (language items absorbed):

**Figure 3: The role of interaction in language learning (adapted from van Lier, 1988)**



From his point of view, the pedagogic value of interaction lies in the assumption that pupils who are receiving or eliciting input in this way, are likely to display an increased personal effort and greater mental involvement than when responding to drill exercises or working in isolation. Peck (1990) provided empirical substantiation of this in his account of an experimental project where teachers attempted to increase pupil talk in their classrooms. The strategy they used was to encourage interactional

exchanges in a variety of patterns that allowed for more pupil involvement, i.e. pupils asking each other questions, pair work and chains. The outcome was: increased confidence in the less able pupils, an increased preparedness on the part of the pupils to take an active part, and teacher enthusiasm.

### 3.5.3 Accommodation theory

Accommodation theory (AT) or communication accommodation theory (CAT), is an integrated, interdisciplinary premise "*at the interface between language, communication and social psychology*" (Giles *et al.*, 1991: 2), and serves as a basis for the study of group membership and intergroup relationships in communicative interaction<sup>12</sup>.

In simple terms, AT holds that social interaction within and between groups is a vital and highly intricate process where factors such as the motivation, attitudes and social distance of the interactants affect the development and outcome of the interaction. It is said that a complex set of alternatives are available to communicators in face-to-face talk and these lead them to achieve solidarity or detachment with the interactant. Such behaviour is labelled convergent or divergent 'accommodation' respectively and is central to the study of interactional contexts (Giles *et al.*, 1991).

In the literature on AT, it is pointed out that people demonstrate psychological and linguistic accommodation towards others. The distinction between psychological and linguistic accommodation is explained as follows:

Psychological convergence is "*the individuals' belief that they are integrating with others*", while psychological divergence is "*the belief that they are differentiating from others*" (Thakerar *et al.*, 1982: 222, in Giles, *et al.*, 1991:32). Linguistic convergence is manifested by an interlocutor's speech shifts towards others, while linguistic divergence is accomplished by means of speech shifts away from others. A study by Coupland (1984) for example, highlighted the psychological and linguistic convergence of a travel agent who varied the phonological patterns in her speech in order to approach her clients of different socio-economic background.

Aside from the above 'polarised' types of accommodation mentioned above, it is maintained that interactants may exhibit complementary accommodation in contexts where there are role discrepancies which the interactants not only accept but also expect. For example, in a teacher-pupil relationship the one participant acknowledges the subordinate role to the other, so that there is complementarity between both parties. In this case, a consensus is important for the relationship to be complementary. However, this complementarity may be under- or overvalued depending on whether the interactants are predisposed to establishing distance or -in the opposite case- approximation between each other. This leads the interactant(s) to make certain choices in discourse management and control strategies in order to show their disposition towards the prescribed role options (Giles *et al.*, 1991). For example, the behaviour of individuals signalling resistance to another's authoritative or dismissive style would be described as underaccommodative.

In the FL teaching and learning context, the manner in which the participants react to one another can facilitate or impede progress in the teaching/learning efforts, depending on what accommodative processes are in operation. Hence, the aforementioned concepts and relationships invoked by AT support the focus on individual as well as group perceptions of the learning experience (van Lier, 1988). The analysis of interaction in this particular context enables the researcher to gain insight into difficulties and outcomes in the process of language teaching, the favourable or unfavourable factors of the teaching and learning situation, and the affective forces of willingness or resistance to learning the subject in question. The fact that the nature of classroom interaction informs us about the strengths and weaknesses of the educational experience, altogether justifies its role as a research variable.

### **3.6 Interaction types and patterns**

#### **Types of interaction**

Investigations into the different facets of interaction, how the communication process is manifested and how it develops, have enabled researchers to create a number of



classification systems to describe their findings. In the section that follows, I will exemplify the types and patterns that can be identified in classroom interaction.

To begin with, interaction can be verbal and nonverbal (Mehan, 1979). That is to say, teacher and pupils engage in talk about the target language and through it, but they also make nonverbal contributions, such as nodding, leaning forward, using hand gestures and facial expressions in their attempt to 'contextualize' their behaviour and communicate effectively. The negotiation of meaning between the interactants can be such that communication is effected and the lesson proceeds smoothly, or it can lead to communication breakdown, where the exchanges fail to enhance learning. In this way, interaction can either be congruous or incongruous (Malamah-Thomas, 1987).

Interactional activity can be prescribed and predictable, or spontaneous and naturalistic (Seliger and Long, 1983). In the former situation, teacher and pupils adhere to specific roles of behaviour (e.g. to give directions, to comply) and they follow a fixed pattern of sequences in the course of the language lesson (e.g. in the instructional phase elicitation sequences are expected and executed). In the latter situation, interaction is naturalistic in the sense that pupils attempt to create opportunities of language use for themselves, instead of relying on the nominations of the teacher (Seliger and Long, *ibid.*).

The above classifications constitute a general framework from which one can begin to perceive the possible manifestations of interaction, its structure and outcomes. However, classifications can also be made at a more detailed level, with respect to the nature of interactional exchanges, as will be presently shown.

### **Patterns of interaction**

Edwards & Furlong (1977) list a set of participant structures<sup>13</sup> that are most likely to occur in *traditional* classrooms, and which aptly reflect the covert assumptions held by the participants regarding teacher and pupil roles (in Cohen & Manion, 1981):

- a teacher talking to a silent audience and requiring everyone's attention.



- a teacher talking to one pupil but assuming that everyone else is taking notice.
- a teacher talking to one or more pupils when the others are not expected to listen and may be allowed to talk.
- a pupil talking to the teacher with the rest of the class as an audience.
- pupils discussing amongst themselves with the teacher as chairman [sic] (neutral or otherwise).
- pupils discussing amongst themselves with the teacher absent.

Malamah-Thomas (1987) describes patterns of classroom interaction pertaining to the *language* classroom which can occur in various combinations and can be effective only within a context of mutual co-operation and reciprocity. She specifies these patterns as follows:

- the teacher addresses the whole class.
- the teacher addresses a group of pupils or an individual pupil.
- an individual pupil interacts with the teacher or fellow classmate.
- an individual pupil interacts with a group of pupils.
- the teacher works with the textbook<sup>14</sup>.

The typical pattern is one based on a 'two-party' context, where one party is the teacher and the other the class of pupils (Hammersley, 1984). The teacher controls what is done, participates in nearly all the exchanges, selects the participants, decides on the order of the participants' turns and the number of turns they may take. The pupils are expected to follow the teacher's instructions and limit the scope of their activities to responding to teacher elicitations.

However, classroom relationships are more complex than they might seem on the surface. Pupils do more than simply respond to teacher-initiated acts. They communicate with each other, react and comment on the course of events, evaluate each other's work, and often breach the turn-taking rules. What is considered as the teacher's established power to dominate depends significantly on the pupils' co-operation. It is not unusual to find, for instance, that some pupils choose not to interact with the teacher at all and start chatting with fellow classmates. Their lack of

co-operation and the consequence of their behaviour can in fact threaten the success of the lesson (Allwright and Bailey, 1991). As Hamilton and Delamont (1984: 96) caution: *"...it is a mistake to assume that there are only two parties to classroom interaction and that these parties are stable"*.

### **3.7 Form- and meaning-focused interaction**

This distinction derives from the way teaching is organised, i.e. what kind of input is provided by the teacher and what kinds of exchanges take place. Thus, form-focused instruction involves an exchange of information about the structure of the TL and how discrete items should be learnt and used. The teacher presents and explains how certain linguistic items operate (for example, the past and present perfect tenses), and the pupils attempt to produce language that contains these items. Repetitions and error correction are a regular occurrence in form-focused interaction. On the other hand, meaning-focused instruction encourages interaction that involves authentic communication, where accuracy of form is not important. Rather, pupils are encouraged to use their IL resources as well as their non-linguistic resources to engage in classroom activities.

As Ellis (1990) points out however, this is not an 'air-tight' distinction and any lesson will be made up of both form- and meaning-focused exchanges. A meaning-focused exchange between teacher and pupil, for instance, may involve the teacher explaining the formation of a lexical item with respect to its tense. However, in general, this distinction is useful as it helps describe the focus of verbal interaction in terms of its position on the form-/meaning-focused continuum.

### **3.8 Topic- and activity-oriented interaction**

Similarly, the domains of 'topic' and 'activity' are used to describe classroom interaction (van Lier, 1988). One of the ways in which interaction is built up is by selecting a topic and producing language which is related to it. From this initiation, various activities can follow, such as recall and exemplification of rules, vocabulary extension, practice of structural items, etc. The choice of topic upon which the lesson

will be constructed is primarily the teacher's responsibility. S/he will also bring in the appropriate activities that are to be done although it might happen that the pupils may also initiate or negotiate the choice of topic. The management of topic and activity will vary from teacher to teacher and class to class. We can determine the type of interaction that occurs on the basis of where the relative focus lies on the topic-activity continuum, indicating the degree of the teacher's control:

*(i) Less topic oriented - Less activity oriented:*

Instances of this type of interaction would include talk on any subject without attending to form or ways of communicating intentions and meanings (e.g. small talk). The teacher does not control the topic or the activity.

*(ii) More topic oriented - Less activity oriented:*

Here the pupils obtain information from the teacher, such as announcements, instructions, explanations.

*(iii) More topic oriented - More activity oriented:*

In this case interaction proceeds along the lines of a particular theme which the teacher introduces or the pupils select, together with specific rules that should be followed, for example interviews, reports, discussions.

*(iv) Less topic oriented - More activity oriented:*

Here participants concentrate on following the rules for making accurate formulations and ignoring topical elaboration (e.g. greeting, apologising, practising the present perfect).

These classification types provide a picture of the different kinds of contributions that are made in classroom interaction. Van Lier (1988) points out that they can provide insights into the kind of input and the quality of language practice that the pupils receive, if they are examined in relation to the patterns of participation in the classroom. For example, if pupils have greater topic control, their contributions may be more frequent and consist of longer, more complex constructions.

### **3.9 Address types and interaction goals**

Ellis (1984a) mentions two other dimensions with which an ordered picture of the classroom environment can be created. These dimensions relate to the verbal activity that goes on, with respect to the address types of the participants and the goal of the interaction.

#### **(a) Address types**

Within the context of a classroom, a participant can take on certain defined roles, such as teacher, pupil, class member or group member, as well as alternating roles, such as speaker, hearer, addressee. The frequency of occurrence and type of roles that are adopted, reflect particular views on the patterns of interaction and the nature of the language lesson.

#### **(b) Interaction goals**

These are goals that are pursued by the teacher and may be of three types:

- i) Core goals, i.e. when the teacher provides explicit instruction concerning the form of the target language, or exchanges meaningful information with the pupils, or checks that an activity is completed.
- ii) Framework goals, i.e. giving directions or making exchanges which relate to the organisation of classroom activity.
- iii) Social goals, i.e. accommodating the interests of the participants on social matters or topics, for example, discussing the problems of adolescence.

An examination of the dimensions proposed by Ellis -and indeed those of all the other researchers referred to earlier- could generate a focused description of potentially significant aspects of the development of classroom interaction.

### **3.10 Summary**

This chapter has examined a range of issues relating to research into the FL classroom. This far, it has been stressed that interaction is the essential component of communication in the FL classroom, and drawing from the literature, particularly

Interlanguage Theory, the Interaction Hypothesis and Accommodation Theory, support has been provided for the relevance of interaction to classroom-based research. Subsequently, the chapter focused on various dimensions of classroom interaction which reflect the manner in which teaching and communication is effected between the members of a class. Several features of interaction were presented which have been used in the description and analysis of classroom behaviour, including the general features of classroom interaction and the kinds of participation that can be detected, the focus of verbal interaction on form and/or meaning, the development of interaction along the topic/activity continuum, the titles of address attributed to participants and the interaction goals that may be pursued by the teacher.

## CHAPTER FOUR: Education and EFL provision in Greece and Germany

This chapter presents the background information to the educational systems and EFL provision of the countries in which the research was undertaken.

### 4.1 A short historical overview of education in Greece

One of the unequivocally grim phases in Greek history were the nearly 400 years of subservience to Ottoman rule (1453-1821). Kept in a state of slavery and poverty, the majority of the Greek people were deprived of getting any form of education and had none but the Orthodox clergy to turn to for support and guidance:

"In the eyes of the people, the Ecumenical Patriarch represented the Byzantine emperor, the leader of the enslaved nation, the patron of the saints, the protector of the language, the customs and the Greek philanthropy" (Kitsaras, 1957: 36).

In the beginning, the priests turned their cloisters and places of worship into a primitive type of primary school, known as the "*secret school*". Despite the danger of discovery and the hardship they faced, they assembled groups of children by night and, in dimly lit rooms, taught them how to read, write and calculate. The textbook consisted of a piece of paper upon which the alphabet and the first lessons on reading were written, and was supplemented with extracts from the bible. Writing was practised on the ground with sand and everything was done in silence or in whispers (Kitsaras, 1957).

In 1630, the Orthodox *Patriarcheion* helped establish numerous secondary schools<sup>15</sup> known as 'higher schools' in all the large cities and organised the supply of books. It was no longer in the monasteries and churches but in these new schools that the young were prepared for the liberation and rebirth of their country, which came in 1821.



With the establishment of the new Greek state in 1828-1830, a member of the Bavarian royalty, King Otto I, was appointed to succeed the first governor of the country, Kapodistrias, who was murdered shortly after his rise to public power. Inevitably, the organisation and function of the Greek educational system was influenced by 'foreign' pedagogical theory and practice. By decision of the Bavarian king the 'reciprocal teaching method' (*allelodidaktiki*) was introduced in the public schools in Greece, as prescribed by the French School Law<sup>16</sup> (Kitsaras, 1953).

A central feature of the reciprocal teaching method was the transfer of teaching duties to individual pupils who were specially chosen by the teacher for this purpose. The pupils, called 'monitors', were then responsible for teaching their classmates what they themselves had been taught by the teacher, while the teacher's role was limited to that of warden or guard, watching over the pupils and ensuring that order and discipline were kept. Discipline, homogeneity, and conformity were held as the only proper forms of behaviour and were enforced by means of a strictly regularised lesson procedure as well as the employment of reward and punishment techniques (Tzartzas, 1996).

In 1874, Greek educationalists became familiar with Herbartian<sup>17</sup> pedagogy, whose central ideological premise was that young people must receive a moral education and should be brought up to aspire to a set of ideals leading to physical and spiritual perfection. Through seminars and publications endorsed by one of the most active supporters of this movement, professor Exarchopoulos, secondary school teachers all over the country were informed of the theoretical principles and practical applications of Herbartian ideology (Geredakis, 1985).

Exarchopoulos organised the structure of the school curriculum along two main paths: by setting subjects suitable for the cultivation of the soul on the one hand (such as history and language, the study of classical texts by Xenophon and Hironianos, etc.), and subjects for the maintenance of a healthy physical condition on the other hand (such as gymnastics and hygiene). The implementation of the secondary school curriculum was thus made to aspire to the classical Greek ideals "*kalos - agathos*". Yet, in practice, this plan fell through. In a report written by a



school inspector who had been commissioned by the Minister of Culture in 1880 to look into the state of the schools, it was stated that:

"apart from a few exceptions, the Greek schools are spiritual graves and the teachers indifferent gravediggers of the spirit..." (Geredakis, 1985: 134).

Gradually, small advances were made in educational provision especially through the initiatives of private foundations who arranged for the publication of books, the establishment of evening- and Sunday-schools, the opening of libraries, etc. (Kitsaras, 1957). Amidst much turbulence<sup>18</sup> in Greek society, the early 1900s also brought about a period of new pedagogical reforms, signifying a turn away from Herbartian pedagogy. German, French and English publications on pedagogy and psychology were translated into Greek, particularly those regarding whole-class teaching and the Montessorian<sup>19</sup> method. A new concept of the school was projected, as an open-learning environment with pleasant surroundings and functional working-places, where there is no fixed program of learning and no collective lesson. Indeed, the first nursery schools to be established in Greece were inspired by the Montessorian model.

On the whole, however, the public educational system embraced a classicist orientation in its curricula by aspiring to transmit "*the wisdom and culture of previous generations*" (Clark, 1987: 5), to instigate a revival of the grand historical past of Greek civilisation, to maintain a living connection with the norms, values and prototypes of that traditional ideological movement and bring them into contemporary socio-political life. Repeated attempts to legalise such a traditional orientation were made until as late as 1974 (Xohellis *et al.*, 1990).

In line with the classicist tradition, pupils were required to develop their intellectual capacity by relying on purposeful study and the conscious reapplication of the subject-matter (Clark, 1987). The prevalent teaching mode was didactic, textbook-focused, and tests and examinations were the ultimate means of assessing the progress of pupils who, as a result, became highly competitive and individualistic.

Whilst operating mainly within a classical humanist tradition, over the past decades the Greek education system also adopted features of a reconstructionist philosophical framework, in which education is viewed as a means of intellectual, social and economic progress to be made available to all, and in which all citizens are valued as equals (Clark, 1987). One can perceive this reconstructionist strand in the Greek educational system by noting the changes in the statements of the Ministry's general objectives concerning education. For instance, after the downfall of the dictatorial regime (1967-1974), the 1976 Constitution defined the broader aims of education as being:

"the ethical, intellectual, vocational and physical training of the population; the development of national and religious identity, and the creation of self-sufficient and responsible citizens" (Holmes, 1983: 341).

The long-term goal was to strengthen the peoples' collective sense of unity and responsibility, to support ethnicity, national identity, cultural values. A few years later, however, the growth of the individual began to be given greater emphasis. In Law 5-2-85 the purpose of education was outlined as follows:

"...to contribute towards a multi-faceted, harmonious and balanced development of pupils, so that independently of sex and social origin, they have the possibility to develop an integrated personality and live creatively." (in Theodoropoulou, 1992: 22)

Thus, the new role of primary and secondary education was to promote not only ethnic but also individual interests, to secure equal educational opportunities for both sexes, to make additional provisions for gifted pupils or pupils with special needs (Theodoropoulou, 1992). At the level of educational policy then, by emphasising individual as well as national freedom and democracy, the authorities embraced a more progressive ideology.

#### **4.1.1 Education in Greece in the present**

In contemporary Greek society, education is a matter of immense importance. Parents hold high educational aspirations for their children, they display an earnest

preoccupation with their progress at school and tend to pressurise them as far as possible into tertiary education and the pursuit of academic careers. The majority of Greek children thus enter into a 'social competition' lasting through six years of secondary school, where they fervently work towards the single goal of gaining a place in higher education (Hatzichristou & Hopf, 1992).

Education is generally viewed in utilitarian terms, as a way of obtaining formal qualifications and fulfilling self-interests, with a lesser regard to the quality of the qualifications gained (Husén & Postlethwaite, 1994: 2515). The commitment to education is to a great extent driven by the conviction that the ones with more qualifications obtain higher earnings and hold better jobs. Despite the known limitations of the existing educational institutions, for generations of young people, higher education has stood as the gateway to prestige and social advantages (Ministry of Education, 1995; Kanellopoulos, 1996).

This characteristic willingness to 'have an education' can be well understood if one considers the admiration that the Greek people hold of their own classical heritage which is coupled by a deeply felt need to remedy the intellectual deprivation suffered during the long period of Ottoman rule (1453 -1821). Particularly after World War II when Greece began to function as an organised state, nationally, politically and financially independent of foreign power, it has endeavoured to develop as a modern, democratic and 'knowledgeable' society. Indeed, evident changes in the hierarchy of social values, growing expectations for a better quality of life, and pressures from political, scientific and technological blocks have made the need for educational change and improvement inevitable (Karastathi, 1987).

#### **4.1.2 General educational reforms**

Part of Greece's efforts to develop socio-politically and economically as a modern nation has been a series of reforms intended to improve educational provision. Listed in table 5 below are some of the major changes that were proposed with the successive reforms over the past thirty years (Ministry of Education, 1995):



**Table 3: Major proposals of the 1964-1992 educational reforms**

Year	Reform measures
1964	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• establishment of demotic Greek as the official medium of instruction.</li> <li>• secondary education divided into two cycles, lower and upper, each lasting 3 years.</li> <li>• 'free education' extended to include studies at the tertiary level.</li> <li>• abolishment of entrance examinations for the secondary level.</li> <li>• establishment of technical-vocational schools in secondary and tertiary levels.</li> <li>• introduction of a nationwide uniform examination system for entry into university.</li> </ul>
1967	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• almost all of the 1964 reform measures were abolished by the dictatorial regime.</li> <li>• new higher technical-vocational institutes to cover the need for technicians.</li> <li>• a reduction of the numbers of pupils allowed to enter university.</li> </ul>
1974-76	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• re-introduction of the 1964 reforms.</li> <li>• compulsory education extended from 6 to 9 years.</li> <li>• the gymnasium was designated as the common general secondary school.</li> <li>• abolishment of technical education at the lower secondary level.</li> <li>• abolishment of examinations from the primary to the secondary school.</li> </ul>
1981	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Greece becomes a member of the European Economic Community.</li> <li>• democratisation of the educational system.</li> <li>• automatic promotion through all grades of the primary level.</li> <li>• abolishment of examinations from lower to upper secondary level.</li> <li>• delay in the choice of special courses for university entrance examinations until the final year of upper secondary school .</li> <li>• establishment of pupil committees and increase of responsibilities of teachers' advisory boards.</li> </ul>
1985	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• attempt at decentralisation of the education system.</li> <li>• adoption of a liberal ideology, promoting participatory teaching and learning.</li> <li>• participation of local administration in operating the local and regional schools encouraged.</li> <li>• abolishment of all entry examinations to all upper secondary schools.</li> </ul>
1990-92	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• creation of a national system of Vocational education.</li> <li>• establishment of regional centres for in-service-education.</li> <li>• reorganisation of the pupil and teacher assessment procedures.</li> </ul>

These reforms triggered a series of internal structural transformations and administration changes, towards a reorganisation of secondary education that would fit the social changes and economic needs of the country. The measures involving the establishment of the common secondary school, the reduction and elimination of

selection by examination at different stages of schooling and the spread of educational opportunity across the whole school-going population resemble quite similar reform measures that were prescribed and adopted by a number of European countries in the 1950s (Skilbeck, 1990). A definite influence on educational policy and development was Greece's incorporation into the European Economic Community in 1981. At that time high-standard modernisation became an important stimulus and aspiration for change. As pointed out by Karastathi (1987), the 1985 Law was particularly liberal in promoting participatory teaching and learning and the development of children's' personality and creativity. Again, it appears that Greek policy-makers were inspired by the educational innovations on content and methods of teaching that were introduced in the schools of industrialised OECD countries<sup>20</sup> in the 1960s and 1970s (Skilbeck, 1990, citing Connell, 1980).

Yet, as can be clearly seen from the table, in the scheme of educational reorganisation, matters of pedagogical practice and training were until very recently left largely unattended. There appears to be *"a lack of congruence between the ideology of the 1985 reforms for education and the character of everyday educational practice and aims as set and pursued by society at large"* (Husén & Postlethwaite, 1994: 2516). Thus, although the fundamental ideology of education is evolving, policy implementation is being strongly affected by political, economic and social constraints. Educational reforms in Greece have not been followed through as efficiently as desired. Possible reasons that may account for this are:

1. A history of educational conservatism which nurtures a deeply entrenched traditional ethos is in many ways still present. It is acknowledged that the Greek education system has preserved a *"rather erroneous homogeneity"* in its curriculum, the textbooks, the recruitment of teaching staff, etc., leading to a chronic indisposition of the educational mechanism, which is deeply engraved in public consciousness (Ministry of Education, 1995: iv).
2. Educational action has in the past served as an instrument for the pursuit of political interests. For instance, it is maintained that the setting up of Pedagogical



Academies in rural areas was an action intended to secure the favourable predisposition of the public towards certain politicians and win a substantial number of votes for their political party. The criteria for the operation of these Academies were so flexible as to cancel out the possibility of real qualitative gains (Zografou, 1977: 171).

3. Empirical findings of the last 25 years indicate that educational planning has not had good results. According to Psacharopoulos (1986), planning activity is adversely affected by the existent administrative structure and the low level of co-operation and co-ordination between ministries. This obviously makes effective planning very difficult if not impossible.

4. The centralised organisation<sup>21</sup> of political power allows for decisions to be taken only at a national level and hinders a flexibility of action at local levels. Plans for decentralisation are long overdue, as educational authorities in the provinces and district areas do not undertake any action without awaiting decisions or approval from above.

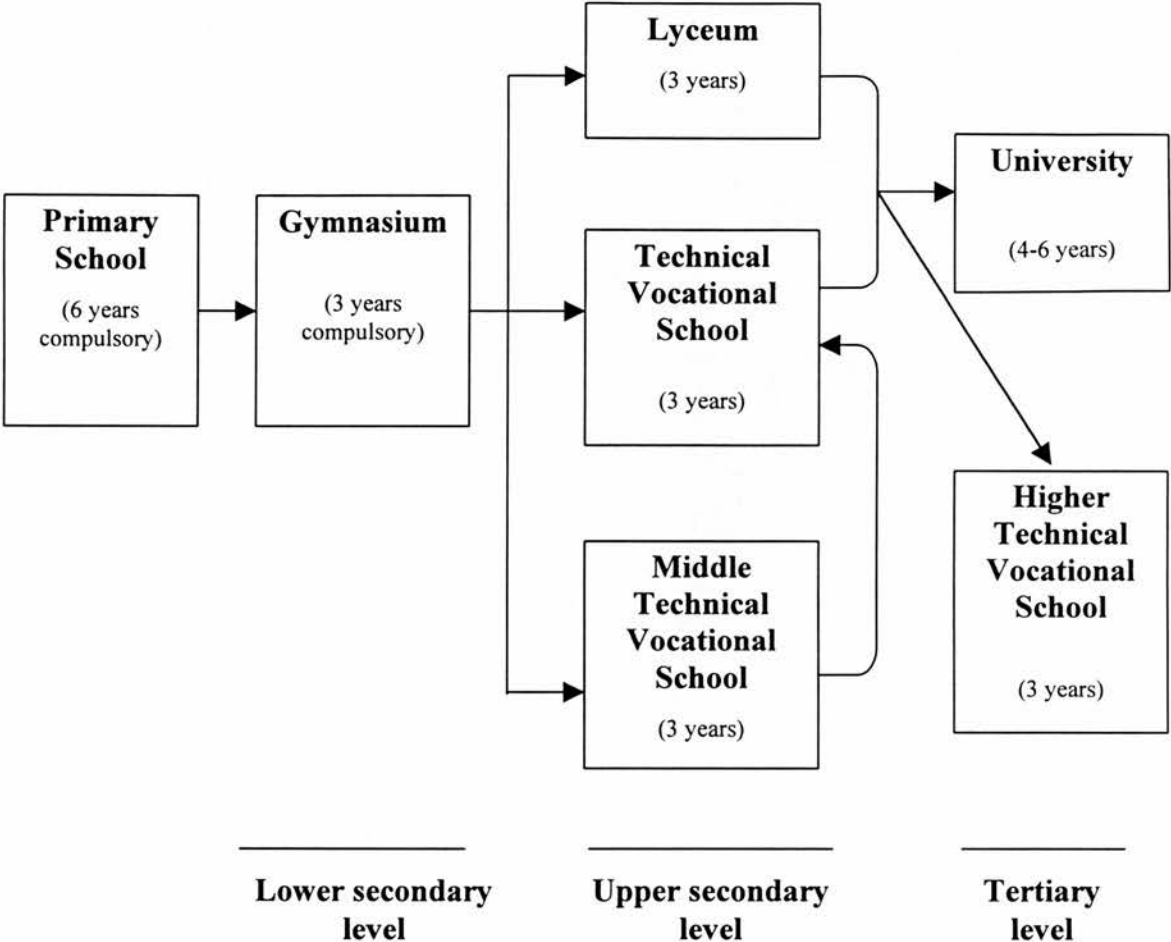
5. The reforms and legislation affecting education have not been the result of all-encompassing studies. There has been a serious lack of systematic quantitative and qualitative studies in secondary and tertiary education (Pesmazoglou, 1994).

A description of the structure of the Greek educational system and its operation follows below.



## 4.2 The Structure of the Greek education system

Figure 4: The structure of the Greek education system



General education is provided at three levels: primary, secondary and tertiary. The primary level and the first three years of secondary school, (corresponding to ages 6 to 15), are compulsory (see figure 5). Over the past 25 years the percentage of the population studying at all educational levels has risen and an increase in enrolments has been observed, particularly at the secondary level.

#### **4.2.1 Primary level (*Dimotiko*)**

Primary education lasts for six years, and roughly covers the age period of six to twelve years<sup>22</sup>. According to data given by Theodoropoulou (1992), there are 8,069 primary schools in the country and 43 599 teaching staff employed. The number of pupils enrolled has been calculated at 813,353 (of which 48% are female). The official figures for teacher/pupil ratios are given as 1:19, although classes are often composed of around thirty children to a teacher (UNESCO, 1995). Some primary schools in rural areas operate with a single teacher (and are thus known as single-post schools) while others have up to fifteen teachers and are categorised as multi-post schools. Figures in the UNESCO Statistical Yearbook (1995) show that the number of primary schools over the last decade has been decreasing.

The subjects taught include Mathematics and Science, Geography and History, Religious instruction and Environmental studies, Handicrafts and Music, Physical Education (PE) and Language (*demotiki*) (Holmes, 1983). Language is considered the most important subject, and as such takes up more than one third of the teaching time. The Environmental Studies lesson is also considered important due to its function as a 'window to the natural world'. The primary school curriculum has recently been changed to include the teaching of English as a foreign language in the last two grades of primary school. Apart from Physical Education and Handicrafts, most subjects are taught straight from the book. The curriculum and textbooks are prescribed by the Ministry, for both the state and private primary schools.

#### 4.2.2 Secondary level (Gymnasium - Lyceum)<sup>23</sup>

Secondary school is divided into a lower and an upper cycle, otherwise known as gymnasium and lyceum. Each cycle lasts three years. Schooling at this level coincides with adolescence. Secondary schools fall into two main categories<sup>24</sup>, namely, a) General (which include the Experimental schools) and b) Vocational (which include Commercial and Naval and Technical education schools) (Holmes, 1983). Statistical data shows that pre-university technical/vocational schools are not preferred by the school-going population. For example, in the year 1990, a total of 716,404 pupils were registered in the general schools as opposed to 136,753 pupils in the vocational schools (UNESCO Statistical Yearbook, 1995).

The first three years of secondary school provide general education on the basis of a variety of subjects. The curriculum of the lower cycle (gymnasium) is designed to extend the general education which was begun in the primary school. The upper cycle (lyceum) is intended to guide pupils towards subject areas which best relate to their choice of career.

Officially, the objectives of secondary education are *"to promote ... the whole development of pupils in relation to the abilities they have at this age and to the corresponding demands of life"* (Government Gazette 1566/85: 2550). Specifically, it is stated that secondary schooling should enable pupils to:

- expand their value-system (moral, religious, national, humanistic and other) so as to harmonise their behaviour according to its prescription; to control and direct their emotions towards creative aims and humanitarian acts.
- supplement and combine their knowledge with the corresponding social concerns so as to successfully confront various situations and to look for solutions to life's problems responsibly, within a climate of creative dialogue and group effort.
- cultivate their linguistic expressions so as to express their thoughts orally and in writing clearly and correctly.
- steadily develop physically and ... cultivate their active tendencies and abilities.
- become familiar with the various forms of art and develop an aesthetic taste, useful for their own creative expression" (Government Gazette, 1985: 2550).

While all three types of *gymnasia* follow a common curriculum, the situation is highly differentiated in the upper cycle where pupils attend different *lykeia*. A pupil

can choose to attend either a general, classical, technical, vocational, or integrated comprehensive lyceum, all of which officially have equal status. In the general *lykeia*, pupils tend to orient their studies towards either a practical or a theoretical direction (i.e. the Sciences or the Humanities). In their final year, they have a choice of subjects which constitute a more narrow-focused subject-area. These subjects fall into four categories (or streams), namely, Mathematics, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences and the Classics, and correspond to the areas of study that can be pursued in tertiary education. The curriculum still allows for pupils to be taught certain subjects of the other streams, but these make up for fewer lessons in the weekly schedule. There is a fifth stream at the lyceum with no defined specialisation, for those who do not intend to pursue studies in higher education<sup>25</sup>.

In reality, the pedagogical function of the lyceum has long disappeared. It now exists as the 'pre-chamber' for the university entrance examinations. It has been observed that pupils dedicate their years of study at the lyceum to studying for the examinations, while neglecting all other subjects, other school and extra-curricular activities and generally failing to fulfil the broader pedagogical aims of secondary education (Ministry of Education, 1995). Thus, the implementation of a holistic, general education emphasising the balanced development of the (physical, mental, emotional) personality of individuals is lacking. Likewise, the preparation of pupils in becoming active, responsible members of a democratic society is not sufficiently pursued in school life.

#### **4.2.2.1 The environment of Primary and Secondary Schools**

The school environment is one area that seems have undergone little change over many decades. Despite good intentions and optimistic planning, the natural environment of the school and the supply of educational material remain in many ways inadequate (Xohellis *et al.*, 1990). In 1994, as revealed in the press, the most serious problem the Ministry of National Education and Religion was facing, was the shortage of school buildings (Panagiotarea, 1994).

In urban areas some school buildings are privately owned, which means that use of the property is temporary and a whole school community can be 'uprooted' from one year to the next. In more remote areas of the country, the school premises are made up of 'assigned buildings', i.e. empty shops and rooms of adjacent houses. In the large cities, (Athens, Thessaloniki, Patra) 60-70% of the schools operate in double shifts. That is to say, a building is often shared by two sets of pupil populations and teaching staff who attend in morning and afternoon shifts. The 'morning' school begins at 8:00 am and ends at 13:45 pm, and the 'afternoon' school is from 14:15 pm to 19:45 pm. A number of school buildings even accommodate a third shift, when they operate as a night school.

Each of the schools that shares a building with another has to alternate its timetable from one week to the next. This means that for a week school A operates in the mornings and school B in the afternoons, but the following week the reverse occurs: school B operates in the mornings and school A in the afternoons, and so on (Appendix F). The rationale behind this arrangement is to fulfil the 'equal opportunities' policy by ensuring that all pupils experience the advantage of being taught in the early hours of the day when their minds are fresh and they can concentrate better, as well as attend lessons in the less productive afternoon hours.

Often, it is not only schools that are too few but also classrooms inside the schools. While the size of the school depends on the needs of the area, many buildings are old and lack certain school quarters such as assembly halls, gyms, libraries, labs, music rooms. Plans for the extensions of buildings are undertaken at sluggish paces over a number of years and are unable to cater adequately for the growing influx of pupils.

The interior of the schools consists of the head's office, a staff room, a canteen and rows of classrooms. In some schools there is a large hall that is used for special functions and Physical Education (PE). Generally, however, assembly halls and libraries are non-existent, and PE takes place in the playground.

The classrooms are furnished with desks and chairs set in rows, a desk at the front for the teacher and a blackboard. The walls are usually bare of charts, posters, maps and other similar learning aids. This is mainly due to the fact that the buildings are shared by two sets of pupil populations and because project work is not encouraged (Theodoropoulou, 1992). Other facilities such as overhead projectors, tape-recorders, instruments for science and chemistry, gymnastics equipment, photocopying machines are rarely available, especially in rural schools. Primary schools are usually located separately from the lower and upper secondary schools and can be recognised easily because they are smaller and usually more colourful. In general, it is said that the natural environment of the schools tends to reflect a style of school life that is impersonal and unstimulating (Theodoropoulou, 1992).

#### **4.2.2.2 Materials**

All textbooks are published by the Organisation for Publication of School Books (OEDB) in accordance with the requirements of the official curriculum. The same textbooks for pupils of the same class are used in all the Greek schools. Teachers are expected to use these books as a primary source and to cover all the units that the Ministry prescribes as 'teaching material'. Teachers are also provided with manuals which contain guidelines for teaching and suggestions for modifications that they may make to enhance their lessons.

Textbooks are essential in the Greek classroom because other materials are rarely used in the lessons. Pupils thus depend heavily on the school book in order to confirm that what they have learnt is correct. Their content tends to be absorbed as accurate knowledge: *"whatever is written in the book or said by the teacher is usually accepted as correct and does not become a matter for questioning or discussion in class"* (Tatla-Beidler, 1992: 23). Yet, many Greek school books contain limited information and are written in a way which invites memorisation and does not motivate pupils to read them for their own satisfaction. As a result, interaction, discussion or exchange of information in class are largely discouraged (Tatla-Beidler, *ibid.*).



Among the developments that have taken place in the last two decades (1980-1995) mention must be made of the publication of a significant number of books, reports and articles by Greek academics which have pointed to areas where change and improvement is necessary, and the undertaking of projects for the improvement of primary and secondary level school books and the curriculum (see Antonopoulou, 1991; Pesmazoglou, 1994). Efforts have also been made to provide more basic resources and to employ methods in the schools that will activate the interests, tendencies and abilities of the school-going population more than it did in the past. For example, between 1981 and 1985 a team of experts acting on a plan that aimed to subdue passive rote learning, organised the distribution of new textbooks which were more like 'laboratory books', with special learning activities to be done during class time. The books were designed to help the pupils enquire into the subject matter and build up their knowledge by learning through exploration and experience in the classroom. It was also hoped that, by working with these books, new relationships would be created and a more democratic climate would be created in the classroom (Theodoropoulou, 1992).

#### **4.2.2.3 Progress assessment**

In both the gymnasium and lyceum, progress is assessed by means of short oral or written tests and end-of-term written examinations in all subjects except Physical Education. The oral tests are routinely carried out by the teachers who address questions to individual pupils on the subject-matter of the previous lesson. Written tests are taken by the whole class and they too cover questions based on the material taught in the previous lesson.

According to the curricular directives, two official examinations must be held in the course of each school year: one in December and one in February or June (Moschidou, S., personal communication). The results of these examinations are kept at the school as official records of the pupils' progress. The grades awarded throughout the year, together with the results of the final examinations, determine whether the pupil will be promoted to the next grade. In the event that a pupil fails a

subject, (i.e. gets a mark below 10) he/she has to resit in September. A second failure automatically means that the pupil will have to repeat the year.

The most decisive of the examinations in the mainstream of the Greek educational system are: the one taken at the end of the three-year secondary school cycle, and the one taken for admission into the Universities. The former serves as an indicator of the pupil's potential to proceed with his/her education and the direction in which his/her learning efforts should focus, while the latter determines the pupil's future course of study. The certificate obtained at the end of the lyceum shows the marks obtained in the previous grades and does not incorporate any special final examination (OECD, 1997).

#### **4.2.3 Tertiary level**

A significant proportion of the pupil population (estimated at 150 000 candidates per year) sits for the University Entrance (UE) examinations at the end of the third year of lyceum. These examinations have a national character as they are held throughout the country for the whole school-going population. They are extremely competitive, receive a lot of attention and become a cause of great concern for families, pupils, teachers, tutors and administrators (Papas & Psacharopoulos, 1993). The successful candidates' entry into university is determined by their average grade, which is a combined calculation of the national UE examination results and the grades received during the three years of study at the lyceum. Although candidates mark their own preferences on the application form, they have to register at the university which will accept them on the basis of their resulting credits.

Higher education is organised and managed by the government in collaboration with the University Council and the Academy of Letters and Sciences. All public higher education institutions receive funding by the central and local governments. As with secondary education, higher education is free, and includes the free distribution of textbooks. Additionally, daily meals, medical care, as well as accommodation are

offered free of charge to students from low-income families throughout their period of study.

At present, a total of 17 higher education institutions (AEI) exist<sup>26</sup>, amongst which the three major ones are:

- (a) Athens University, which has six schools: Theology, Philosophy and Literature, Law and Economics, Medicine, Pharmacology, Dentistry. The departments of Archaeology, History and Foreign Languages are part of the School of Philosophy.
- (b) The Metsovian National Polytechnic of Athens, which contains the schools of Civil Engineering, Mechanical and Electrical engineering, Architecture, Chemical Engineering, and Topography-Agronomy.
- (c) The University of Thessaloniki (Salonika), which has nine schools: Theology, Philosophy and Literature, Law and Economics, Medicine, Dentistry, Agriculture and Forestry, Veterinary Science, Pharmacology and the Polytechnic (Holmes, 1983).

Courses last for a minimum of four years and lead to the award of a First degree. Technical and medical courses usually take five to six years to complete. Most of the student population pursue studies in Law, Philosophy and the Humanities. Fewer students opt for scientific and technical studies because these are believed to have low social prestige (Kourvetaris & Dobratz, 1987). According to data given for the year 1988, the total number of enrolments at the universities was 114,933 as opposed to 72,711 registrations in technical institutions (UNESCO Statistical Yearbook, 1995). Technical Educational Institutes (TEI) which function under the supervision of the Ministry of Education are equivalent to the German *Fachhochschule* (in §4.5.4).

It has already been mentioned that a university degree is a highly valued qualification because it is associated with gains in social status. This is one reason why the number of students enrolled at Greek universities has more than doubled in the past decade (Pesmazoglou, 1994: 292). However, this rise in the number of university entrants has led to the overcrowding of many tertiary institutions such as the schools

of Business and Economics which display the most problematic teacher/student ratio of all (The Economist, 1993; Pesmazoglou, 1994).

In general, the situation regarding the function of tertiary institutions is far from satisfactory (OECD, 1997). Graduate courses are held under conditions which seriously impede the educational process. For one, the application of the 'single-textbook system', i.e. the use of a single book or set of handouts for an entire course, adversely affects the type and quality of the lectures delivered, perpetuates the tradition of memorisation, and offers no initiative to students to do their own research. Further, there is no diversification of courses, no structured postgraduate courses and no institutionalised research (Pesmazoglou, 1994). In all,

"with a lack of interest bordering on aversion towards restructuring undergraduate curricula, the university remains an institution of teaching geared to the mass reproduction of teachers for all educational levels" (Pesmazoglou, 1994: 300).

While departments such as those of Classical studies, Chemistry and Mathematics have been functioning mainly to produce teachers for secondary education and for *frontistiria*, other branches such as Philosophy or Psychology remain underdeveloped because they are just "*not needed*". Essentially, the organisation of the curricula "*converge to neutralise all possible developments or innovations in these disciplines*" (Pesmazoglou, 1994: 297-8). In addition, the state lacks mechanisms of quality assurance and has no effective criteria for evaluating teaching staff, academics and academic competence (Papas & Psacharopoulos, 1993).

Despite the fact that the state is financially unable to cover the demand for entry into tertiary education, and is unable to absorb the increasing number of graduates into the labour market, it holds the monopoly in the provision, financing and control of higher education. However, a step towards the decentralisation of tertiary education has recently been taken. The Ministry has allowed a number of small universities to be founded in various provinces and has officially recognised certain independent colleges (*Centres of Free Studies*) in Athens that collaborate with foreign universities. The expansion of universities at regional level and the opening of private institutions has increased the chances of access to higher education. In the

views of some experts these regional universities are "*no more than 'schools' with one to three departments dispersed among various Greek cities*" which exist only as the result of particular party-political interests and initiatives (Pesmazoglou, 1994: 292). And while it is predicted that the legitimisation of these institutions and the various branches of foreign universities which operate via franchise relationships with local institutes will signify the "*end of state monopoly*" (Psacharopoulos (1990: 61), it is "*very doubtful*" whether this change will be accompanied by any quality or efficiency improvement (Kannelopoulos, 1996: 69).

#### **4.2.4 Foreign educational institutions**

In addition to the centrally controlled state and private schools, Tofalis (1985) lists a number of foreign schools that operate in the Greater Athens area and Thessaloniki and are open to both foreign (i.e. non-Greek) and native children. All the existing foreign secondary schools are divided into three categories: a) for non-Greek children; b) for Greeks and foreigners and c) schools for Greek children. Non-Greek schools include the Italian School of Athens, the Japanese and American Community schools in Athens, and the *Petite Ecole Francaise de Thessalonique*. Secondary schools accepting Greek children are the Anatolia American College, and the German School of Thessaloniki. A well-known mixed school is the elementary school of the *Leonteion Lycee* in Athens. Both private and public schools are controlled by the Ministry of Education.

### **4.3 English language instruction in Greek secondary schools**

#### **4.3.1 The status of English in Greek society**

The general tendency in Greek society was to dismiss languages other than the mother tongue as unimportant for the intellectual development of the individual (Holmes, 1983). It was only in the early 1900s that French first gained importance as a foreign language and was made a compulsory school subject at secondary level. Towards the end of the 1950s English came to the fore and displaced the French language<sup>27</sup>.



Nowadays, English is used in daily life in the domains of business, commerce, shipping and tourism, while Greece's membership in the European Union has also brought about a greater use of English in administration. Although it has the status of a 'foreign' language and has no official functions within Greek society, Bex & Peponi (1992: 9) observe that *"English is rapidly becoming a second language in commercial and scientific circles"*. This implies that the position of English is changing from being a compulsory school subject in the curriculum to a medium of communication in certain domains of society.

The value of English as a language of progress and prestige is particularly stressed in discussions about modernisation and the attainment of social status (Prodromou, 1992). Parents regard it as an *"important weapon"* in their children's *"educational armoury"* (Bex & Peponi, 1992: 9). For the Greek youth whose leisure interests lie mainly in music, sport and fashion, contact with English is unavoidable because much of the news and developments in these domains are imparted in English through the media. The market too plays an indirect, albeit significant, role in promoting English language values especially amongst young people. Imported clothing, sports shoes, accessories and toiletries, are products that are associated with modernity and a certain affluence with which young Greek people like to identify themselves. For some time, in the 1980s, the tendency to prefer imported or foreign products grew to such an extent that it was described as a *"xenomania"* which the Greek government endeavoured to counteract by launching campaigns in favour of local products.

The Greek language itself is loaded with a plethora of English loan-words relating to technology, sport, fashion, entertainment, etc. Loanwords are added to the Greek language either in their original form (which are then uttered with a Greek pronunciation as they cannot easily be assimilated phonologically), or by having a suffix attached at the end. Some examples are: sports match, computer, bikini, walkman, sabotage, group, etc. The generous sprinkling of English terms in everyday conversations, in the popular press, in the spoken and written Greek language has been dubbed *"Granglais"* by the media.



The government's proposals for the reform of the foreign language curriculum clearly reflect the importance that is placed on English language education. These proposals are in agreement with the call of the European Union for the promotion of linguistic diversity and inter-ethnic communication. As has officially been recommended in the circulars of the Council of Europe, the country-members are encouraged to ensure that at least one European language other than the mother tongue is taught effectively, for the purposes of communication, business transactions, for social and personal relations (Trim, 1983). Foreign language education is believed to play an important part in the realisation of "*mutual understanding, the exchange of ideas, values and cultural elements, and the firm development of economical relationships*" between people (Mitakidou-Kokkoni, 1992:6). English is taught in 70% of state schools and comes first among the languages that are taught in the 5000 or so privately-owned language institutes operating throughout the country. In addition, conventions and conferences held periodically such as the Balkan Conference on English Language Teaching in Thessaloniki (1993) and TESOL Greece Annual Convention (1994), keep developments in ELT at the forefront of public attention.

#### **4.3.2 The teaching of English as a foreign language in the state sector**

To begin with, the teaching of English was part of the curriculum in the secondary and tertiary levels. However, scholars and educators involved in FL education argued that the absence of a foreign language from the primary school program was detrimental to FL instruction in the secondary schools and obstructed the continuity that should be maintained in subject instruction from one level to the next. Moreover, it was supported that FL learning could facilitate "*awareness of the mother tongue*" (Papaefthymiou-Lytra, 1990), through an exploration of the similarities and differences of the two languages from a structural and sociolinguistic point of view. This argumentation contributed to the introduction of English in all levels of the Greek education system (as of September 1992). The current situation is as follows:

**Table 4: The teaching of foreign languages at the primary and secondary levels**

1st foreign language (English)			2nd foreign language (French/German)		
Level	Grade	Periods	Level	Grade	Periods
Primary	4	3	Primary	4	--
	5	3		5	--
	6	3		6	--
Lower Secondary	1	2	Lower Secondary	1	3
	2	2		2	3
	3	2		3	3
Upper Secondary	1	2	Upper Secondary	1	2
	2	2		2	2
	3	--		3	2

(Source: Ministry of National Education and Religion, 1992)

As of the beginning of the 1992-93 school year, English was officially made a part of the primary school curriculum in urban and rural schools, to be taught in the last three grades i.e. grades 4 to 6. The objectives are to familiarise the young pupils with the basic elements of the target language, to acquaint them with aspects of the foreign culture and to enhance their motivation and interest.

At present, English has been added to the curriculum in central multi-post schools primarily in the larger cities, and some teachers of English have been posted to three-post primary schools. It was expected that teachers of English would be employed to teach in all primary schools throughout the country by the end of 1994-95. However, this plan is being implemented with difficulty because the authorities have not offered sufficient support or incentives that would encourage teachers to move from central urban districts towards the provinces.

At the gymnasium, English language instruction has been taking place three times a week throughout the three-year cycle in lessons of about 45 minutes duration, while the same pattern has been followed in the lyceum. Within the framework of recent reforms in FL education, however, it has been decided that an additional foreign language, i.e. French or German, must be taken up at the lower secondary level

(Appendix G shows an urgent mandate sent to the regional offices regarding the choice of a second foreign language and the allocation of teaching hours), so that, in view of prospective changes to the school program involving the teaching of a foreign language in addition to English, the time allocated to both languages will be reduced by an hour. This is intended to ease the pupils' workload at this level as they prepare themselves for the University entrance examinations (Ministry of Education, 1992).

#### **4.3.3 The state FL curriculum**

One of the ambitions of the Ministry of Education and the Supreme Education Council has been to implement communicative teaching and learning. In compliance with the Council of Europe Project no.12 specifications (van Ek, 1976), a modified draft version of the official ELT curriculum for secondary schools was drawn up and published in the Government Gazette (no.146, 1984) while the official curricular and syllabus objectives for ELT were issued in 1985 (Appendix H). In this document, particular emphasis is placed on the humanistic concept of connecting classroom discourse with life, with social reality and promoting communicative competence, i.e. getting pupils to develop their sociolinguistic skills and practice their communication strategies (Dendrinou, 1985; Stevick, 1990). According to the new guidelines, the Greek pupils were to be placed at the centre of the learning experience and given a more flexible, interactive role. Likewise, the teachers were encouraged to take up roles of organiser, guide, supporter and help pupils use the English language creatively (ibid.).

The main objective of the English course for the 3rd grade of gymnasium is expressed as a general statement in which the development of pupils' receptive and productive skills is emphasised for the purpose of communicating with others in everyday situations. This signifies a decisive shift in the curriculum away from a structural orientation which had prevailed until the 1980s (Karavas, 1993). According to the curriculum the result should be that:

"the learner produces speech acts that are appropriate for each social occasion and are sufficiently correct from a grammaticosyntactical point of view so as not to hinder communication".

The implication here is that conveying meaning is more important than accurate structure or form and that the key to effective communication is sociolinguistic competence (i.e. an understanding of aspects such as the purpose of the interaction, the social context, role-relationships, and the shared information of the participants) (Dendrinou, 1985).

This general objective is particularised further into the terminal task of developing pupils' sociolinguistic skills so that they are able a) to comprehend small, simple, authentic texts and simple spoken language, b) to engage in language-producing activities such as exchanging information, expressing desires, needs, making statements, etc. and c) to acquire the writing skills needed for basic tasks such as filling in a form, writing a note or a short, friendly letter, making a list, giving titles to pictures, etc. The curriculum meticulously lists the kinds of cognitive and linguistic skills that must be developed for pupils to be able to comprehend and produce spoken and written language. For example, the pupil must be able to do the following:

- 1.1. to understand information that is transmitted directly and without periphrases and be able to express him/herself in this way.
- 1.2. to understand information that is transmitted indirectly, with certain implications, reaching conclusions from the context and being able to express him/herself in this way. [...]
- 2.1. to express or write the information that is transmitted to him/her either directly by making a reference in direct or indirect speech, or indirectly by making a comment".

In addition, the document contains an inventory of items elaborating on what the learners should be able to do in terms of socio-functional behaviour. A number of sub-skills are delineated and expressed in structural and functional terms, as for example:

"[the learner must understand and express] evaluative concepts, acceptance or non-acceptance of situations, adequacy or inadequacy expressed by means of *accept + NP, that will (not) do, easy/difficult + infinitive* [in order to] express approval or disapproval or a neutral attitude towards events or situations in his/her environment".

It is also stressed that more than one linguistic forms can be used to express a particular function and that pupils should be made aware of this through the execution of the tasks in their textbook. References to non-linguistic content, i.e. the cultural aspects of the language are absent, although they occasionally appear in the textbook itself, covering a whole unit or parts thereof (e.g. there are sections on British and Greek proverbs, the British educational system, pupil life in Great Britain, etc.).

As can be seen, the curriculum is prescriptive and in some parts highly detailed. It serves as a backbone to the coursebook (which is based upon the principles of the communicative approach), and determines the essential structural and functional elements that should be taught in stages during the course of the school year. It does not, however, explicitly define the mastery level to be attained, neither does it determine time limitations or rate of progress to be kept (possibly due to the fact that levels of competence in English vary from pupil to pupil). It is thus implicitly assumed that some flexibility is tolerated in the amount and kind of work that may be covered in the teaching of the material for the 3rd grade of gymnasium over the school year.

#### **4.3.3.1 Teaching practice**

Explanations on how the material is to be taught, suggestions about preferred teaching procedures and methods, and guidelines on pupil assessment are imparted in separate circulars and in the Teacher's Manual (Dendrinou, 1985).

According to an official document<sup>28</sup> containing a set of guidelines on teaching and assessment, it is stated that pupils must be given opportunities to use authentic language material and produce language on their own. In particular, the lesson



should develop in such a way that the pupils play the primary role while the teacher acts as co-ordinator of classroom events. Further, it is maintained that pupils should be prompted to take initiative in real communication situations, through role play, games, etc. and should be allowed to draw from their own interests in music, art, sport, etc. in ways that could enhance learning. In addition, the lesson should provide the pupils with opportunities for self-assessment, so that they can determine their own rate of progress and be able to regulate their learning also after leaving school.

The Teacher's Manual (Dendrinou, 1985), which complements the specifications laid down by the curriculum designers, also offers brief explanations and suggestions on how the material in the textbook (*Taskway English 3*) could be presented and manipulated, unit by unit. For example, teachers are advised to avoid the teaching of explicit grammar rules. However, the methodological guidelines that are given are not particularly strict. There is scope for variation in the sense that teachers can make modifications according to their own judgement while still working within the framework of the officially prescribed objectives (Dendrinou, 1985).

#### **4.3.3.2 Materials provision: *Taskway English 3***

*Taskway English 3* (Dendrinou et al., 1990) is the third book of a series that was compiled in accordance with the new curriculum specifications and was inspired by the Communicative, learner-centred approach. The team of experts who worked on *Taskway English 3* relied on the findings of a small-scale experimental investigation into the abilities, needs, expectations and experiences of the teachers and the pupil population. In designing the textbooks for use in the Greek secondary schools, the team paid particular attention to the needs of the pupils and the conditions of the Greek educational context (Triantafillou, T., personal communication).

The procedure of developing the new materials is briefly recounted here. Between 1983 and 1985, five pedagogues who were familiar with the educational system and with the ELT situation in Greek state schools were commissioned by the Centre for



Educational Research and In-Service Teacher Training to produce new language teaching materials for the teaching of English in state schools (Karavas, 1993).

As a first step, the team randomly selected 18 state teachers as project assistants. The teachers underwent a 40 hour intensive teacher-training course focusing on materials design and the Communicative Language Teaching approach (CLT). They were then divided into groups of six and each group worked on creating teaching material in the form of complete teaching units for the 1st, 2nd and 3rd grades of the gymnasium respectively. The teachers tested this material in their own schools and completed an evaluation form in which the teachers' and pupils' reactions were recorded (ibid.).

The writing team proposed revisions on the basis of the information contained in the evaluation forms, and had the revised edition of the experimental material distributed to 120 teachers in 100 schools. These teachers were again asked to try out the materials and fill in an evaluation form. Both teachers' and learners' subsequent responses to the experimental materials were negative. It was clearly expressed that they were *"not in favour of the materials and questioned the utility of many of their basic features, (i.e. the changed role of the teacher, the lack of emphasis on formal properties of the language, the open-endedness of many activities"* (Karavas, 1993:60). The Panhellenic Association of State School Teachers of English repeatedly sent letters to the Ministry in which they expressed objections to the introduction and use of the *Taskway* series in the schools (see Appendix I for an open letter). The experimental materials were again revised, given the titles *Taskway English 1, 2 and 3* and distributed to all schools by the end of the year 1988. However, complaints continued to be made by teachers about the lack of explicit grammar instruction, the scant reading passages, the absence of a workbook with exercises (ibid.: 298).

### **Structure and contents of *Taskway English 3***

One of the educational consultants in the Pedagogical Institute who was involved in the production of the *Taskway* series, T. Triantafillou, offered some comments on the

structure and contents of the textbook used in the 3rd grade of gymnasium (personal communication):

- The contents of *Taskway English 3* is 'task-based', meaning that the pupils are required to carry out specific tasks through which they will learn about a new linguistic function, practice using it, or partake in free language production. The tasks contained in each unit are in fact graded and organised on the basis of selected linguistic structures and functions.
- There is a cover page at the beginning of each unit introducing the main theme, and serves as a stimulus for drawing attention to relevant language forms and expressions. This page should be fully exploited in the lesson as the themes are based on events, places, people and interests with which the Greek pupils are familiar (an overview of the main themes, functions and grammar points of each unit can be seen in the table of contents, Appendix J).
- The book does not contain clear-cut steps for the teaching of grammar. The main grammar points are indirectly presented at the end of each unit, where a section entitled "*Check Out*" concentrates more explicitly on structure and provides practice exercises on the main language items encountered in the unit.
- Mechanical linguistic exercises are deliberately and systematically omitted from the book. Rather, pair or group work activities are frequently encountered in every unit. Also, in order to encourage autonomous thinking in the target language, the pupils are required to find a solution to a problem or to react to a particular situation where ways of tackling the problem or the outcome are not pre-determined.
- Some tasks are communicatively easier while other are more difficult, thus catering especially for pupils at different levels of ability in the foreign language. They are designated as optional tasks and are intended to provide extended practice.

The main idea is to encourage fluency. Communicative activities such as pair/group work and role play increase in frequency as the class works through the book. These are intended to provide opportunities for co-operation and personal active involvement, while other tasks such as group decision-making are designed to help pupils develop their social skills. Most activities involve controlled rather than free language production (e.g. constructing questions to given answers, using explicit cues given in the role play) but pupils are also encouraged to practice using more complex patterns of language as far as possible, e.g. by responding to agree-disagree questionnaires. Moreover, *Taskway English 3* contains a large number of authentic texts taken from newspapers, magazines, brochures, etc. as well as semi-authentic dialogues and listening passages, which suggests that an effort was made to offer realistic input in English.

In general, it can be said that the overall composition of *Taskway English 3* is compatible with the curriculum specifications. As such, it embodies the syllabus by providing "*a list or inventory of items ...with which learners are to be familiarised*" (Crombie, 1985: 9).

### **Criticisms of *Taskway English 3***

As it appears, the authors of the *Taskway* books made it a special concern of theirs to design the units in such a way as to permit individual interpretation of the contents and to offer the teacher the possibility of varying his/her teaching procedures, depending on the degree of heterogeneity in their classes (i.e. differences in levels of ability). However, this feature of flexibility inherent in the design of the textbooks seems to be what teachers have found most disturbing. For instance, according to Teacher A, the textbook is "*too communicative*", therefore "*ineffective*". Similarly, as pupils' testimonies reveal, teacher D dismissed the textbook as "*incomprehensible*" (C05) and "*ridiculous*", because "*it doesn't contain what she wants her pupils to learn*" (C06).

One of the school advisers explained that the teachers "*didn't know how to teach [the units in the book]... they didn't have the training*" (Diamantidou, interview,

March 1994). In other words, the main reason behind the Greek teachers' severe criticism of the *Taskway* books is that they were unfamiliar with the basic principles of the Communicative approach when they were given the *Taskway* books to teach and could thus only apply their existing knowledge of a structural or audio-lingual approach in their treatment of the material. Moreover, without a workbook or a teacher's book (i.e. the Teacher's Manual) to guide them in how to prepare and conduct lessons effectively with the use of the textbook, these teachers came to view the textbook as a major hindrance rather than a help in the teaching process. The lack of adequate guidance in the use of *Taskway English 3* resulted in a loss of confidence in working with it (Diamantidou, interview, March 1994).

For some of the pupils who were interviewed, the textbook seemed to be deficient in a variety of ways:

"The book is not interesting for us ... we don't like the tasks from the book. They are boring....very easy (C01) ... incomprehensible" (C02).

Others drew attention to their textbook when they were asked to think about possible areas for improvement of their English lessons. To the question "*Could you think of ways in which your English lesson could be made better?*" a number of pupils seemed to believe that the textbook must either be changed or improved. The comments below reflect their common view:

"the book must change because it has many pictures which don't help at all. (B02)  
For three years we have been learning the past tense." (F02).

"the book should have more English...there are some texts in the book written in Greek. This is not so good." (B06).

"we should get better books..." (C06)..."[because] they are not easy to understand." (D07).

"I think the book is not well written since... we have to learn the tenses without having talked about them... [and] some things like the months were not taught to us" (E06).

A fairly negative picture seems to emerge from what the pupils said they think about their learning material. As Karavas (1993) reports, one likely explanation for the

pupils' reaction against the use of these textbooks is that "*they are used to a variety of EFL textbooks published abroad that are used in private institutes*" and find little worth in the locally produced *Taskway English 3* (ibid.: 63).

Yet, certain features of the textbook, amongst which the presentation visuals and the dialogues or guided role play, seem to have made a positive impression on other pupils:

"...the dialogues are very good and some discussions we do when we start a new unit and have different pictures each time. ... the topics are interesting " (D01).

"I like the dialogues best because I can interact with my neighbour and we practice our English" (B08).

It seems that *Taskway English 3* appears in a different light depending on how teachers make use of its contents.

#### **4.3.3.3 Assessment procedures**

Instructions on testing and evaluation procedures are sent to the schools as a separate circular to teachers by the school adviser for English. It should be noted that the examination guidelines for all the grades of secondary school are more or less based on the same format. The contents of one such document, referring to the final written examination for the year 1992/93 and obtained from the school adviser's office in Patra, is reproduced below (a copy of the original can be found in Appendix K). There are no instructions for an oral assessment.

The question paper should consist of three parts:

1. A taught text of 100-130 words to read, and four comprehension questions to answer based on the text.
2. Four questions on the taught grammar and syntax of the language follow, which may or may not be related to the above text. Each grammatical or syntactic phenomenon may be subdivided into 2-3 questions.
3. There is a dictation part where an extract from a taught text (between 50-70 words) is dictated to the pupils.

Further instructions are that no pupils can be graded with less than 1/20 and that in classes where the pupils are at a higher level and are using approved textbooks<sup>29</sup> other than *Taskway English 3* they will be examined from the books they have used and according to their ability levels.

Greek teachers follow a standard assessment procedure in preparing and administering oral and written tests. The oral test consists of a short questioning phase prior to the start of the lesson of the day: individual pupils are called upon to answer one or two questions relating to the material taught in the previous lesson and are then given a mark according to how well they replied. The written test normally takes up a whole lesson and is based on reading comprehension, grammar exercises and a dictation. These tests enable teachers to monitor individual and group progress towards specific instructional objectives (i.e. those reflected in the syllabus of *Taskway English 3*). It is up to each individual teacher to decide how they will cope with the pupils' strengths and weaknesses (as these emerge from the tests) or whether they will modify their teaching practice in order to take account of differences between pupils. However, according to teachers' reports, post-test remedial work is rarely undertaken. After the grades have been taken down, test papers are returned to the pupils and exam papers are filed away.

Performance indicators constitute teachers' subjective estimates of each pupil's performance in class. They are not strictly representative of the pupil's knowledge and competence in the foreign language for the following reasons: a) there is an absence of a common reference scale for judging the English language level of the pupils, b) teachers may administer strict or lenient grading due to personal sympathies/antipathies and c) the overlap between what is taught and learnt at school and what is taught and learnt at the *frontistirio* makes it difficult to assert that pupil performance in the oral and written tests is a direct result of the work done at school. Thus, it is not possible at this particular school level to effectively monitor what comes out of the teaching/learning process. What is more, there are no procedures carried out to assess teacher and pupil performance or the degree of success of the instructional program itself (Taglides, A., personal communication; Appendix A). As



with the other 'secondary' subjects like Religious Instruction and Music, the assessment procedure fulfils one main purpose: to support or raise the pupils' average grade.

#### **4.3.4 Teacher training and qualifications**

Teachers of English graduate from the Universities of Athens and Thessaloniki, Department of English Language and Literature, at the end of four years of study. After graduation, their names are automatically entered in an official waiting list in the Ministry's 'logbook'. Placements in state schools are made via a public recruitment mechanism whereby individuals are called to take up teaching posts in the order of their listing. Due to the fact that the employment rate is slow<sup>30</sup> and this waiting list has grown longer over time, teachers (of all subjects) have to wait for a number of years before getting a job at a state school. Hence, they tend to lose touch with their profession, which inadvertently results in the quality of their teaching being affected negatively (Kannelopoulos 1996: 69).

It has been said that *"Greece has never had the will nor the financial freedom to provide adequate teacher training programs"* (Prodromou, 1982: 30). However, since the 1985 reforms the educational authorities have increased their efforts to provide opportunities for teacher education and training. According to Law 5-2-85, officially teacher-training is compulsory and falls into the following categories:

- (a) 'Introductory' or pre-service: for teachers expecting or holding a recent placement.
- (b) 'Bi-annual': for those who have taught for five years (applies only for primary school teachers, not for secondary school teachers).
- (c) 'Periodical': to be held when changes in curricula or books, etc., are made (Ministry of Education, 1995: vi).

All in-service training courses for lower and upper secondary education are organised by the school advisers and are held in 16 Regional Training Centres (PEK) of which the first four training centres were set up in 1992, in Athens, Thessaloniki,

Patras, and Lamia. At present, there are 260 advisers in charge of the organisation of in-service meetings, out of which 8 are responsible for the subject English. Their primary role is to inform teachers on issues relating to teaching methodology, to advise them on problems such as pupil misbehaviour, to observe their lessons and assess their performance, to regulate their further education and encourage them to undertake action research within their own work environment (Diamantidou, A., personal communication; Ministry of Education, 1995).

The teachers are assessed on the basis of their active participation in the training course, their ability to prepare, organise and successfully execute teaching as prescribed by the person doing the practical exercises, the individual or group projects and the written examinations (See Appendix L for an outline of an in-service course syllabus). The overall impression of their performance is designated on the certificate provided at the end of the course (Government Gazette, 1985, Chapter 8, article 29).

However, the implementation of in-service training courses has been problematic. In most cases, they occur as 'one-off' events of two days' duration, without any follow-up support. There is a marked reluctance on the part of the teachers to attend, few volunteer. Those taking part come with negative feelings, they feel subjected to great pressure, they object to doing projects and being evaluated. There appears to be an incompatibility between the teachers' expectations and the form of training offered. Complaints are also made of inadequate teaching in the schools in the absence of the teachers undergoing the training (Ministry of Education, 1995; OECD, 1997). Moreover, these courses can only accommodate small numbers of teachers, and since applications are accepted following a random selection, the chances of getting a place are remote; indeed, in-service teacher training is considered a "*matter of luck*" (Usher-Crespi, B., personal communication). In 1990, for example, out of the 49,802 teaching staff in the secondary level, 10,501 teachers of all subjects, i.e. just over one fourth, underwent teacher training (UNESCO Statistical Yearbook, 1995). These constraints have contributed to many teachers' inadequate linguistic and methodological competence (Prodromou, 1982).

#### 4.3.5 Teacher status

Once employed, state school teachers are civil servants with a permanent working contract, set obligations and freedom to carry out their duties without external interference. Their status in the public sector is perceived to be somewhat inferior to that of their colleagues of the private institutes. In the eyes of parents and pupils, the teaching of English in state schools does not seem to measure up to high standards of performance. In informal, lay evaluations of how subjects are taught in state schools, English is often negatively criticised. School adviser Diamantidou mentions in one of her reports that teachers work in an "*environment of negativism*" where teachers "*feel a strong sense of disapproval towards them*" (Diamantidou, 1987: 12). Inevitably, teachers are burdened with feelings of inadequacy and a declining self-worth, even though negative work-related criticism may not be directed at them personally. As a result, secondary school teachers feel they are "*playing second fiddle to the institutes*" (Karavas-Doukas, 1995: 63). In contrast, teachers in the private sector tend to have more of a positive image, a high self-concept and are highly esteemed by parents and pupils.

A clear illustration of this apparent difference in status that is attributed to the two parties comes from one teacher's report of a dialogue she had with her pupils concerning 'state' and 'private' English teachers. The pupils referred to the former as the "*agglikou*", roughly taken to mean "one who is like an English teacher" but referred to the latter as "*kathigitria*", meaning an "acknowledged professional teacher".

One possible explanation for this apparent difference in status between state and private English teachers may well be that 'private' teachers are seen as being a part of a system that endeavours to provide foreign language education surely and effectively. Private language institutes make great efforts to serve the needs of their clients and establish their prestige in an increasingly competitive market through large investments, by establishing connections with overseas institutions such as the Cambridge and Michigan universities, by utilising modern teaching techniques, etc.,

and parents put their money and their faith in this. Parents proudly announce that their child attends Institute so-and-so or claim to know which institute has a good reputation. It is to be expected then, that teachers who work there are regarded highly, as experts who know their job. Of course, there are many exceptions as in all professions, but this tacit differentiation between state and private English teachers is unmistakable.

#### **4.3.6 The teaching of English in the private sector**

Some of the first ELT institutes (*frontistiria*) were founded in Athens in the 1940s, at a time when the central authorities were less interested in promoting FL education in the curriculum and were in fact ...*"unable to provide adequate facilities"* (Spyropoulou, 1993: 4). Private investors and teachers undertook to promote the spread of the English language in Greece and to organise and support English language education so as to enable Greek children to learn the language well. Today, a large sector of privately-owned fee paying schools are run for profit and function side by side with the public sector (Pantelouris, 1980).

In the Greek situation, extra-curricular instruction is rather a matter of course in the life of the Greek pupil. The demand for English tuition is such that, in the large cities there is one *frontistirio* located almost in every block (Spyropoulou, 1993: 6). Alternatively, *frontistiria* are opened in remote rural areas so that young children who cannot travel far can be enrolled in the beginner classes early on. Parents may select a *frontistirio* according to its reputation, proximity to the family home and school, and acquaintance with members of staff who might be working there. In many cases, parents are prepared to move house in order to send their children to private institutes that offer English (Jones, S., personal communication).

Attendance at *frontistiria* is quite high<sup>31</sup>, and since pupils may take courses in English for up to seven or eight years, the private sector carries considerable responsibility for the development of fluency and accuracy among the pupil population (Bex & Peponi, 1992). Pupils attend lessons equal to an average of five



hours per week. Over a period of eight years (from beginner level to FCE) *frontistiria* offer over 800 hours of tuition in English, while the state sector provides approximately 600 hours of tuition over the same period of time (Spyropoulou, 1992: 3). In terms of time allocation, exposure to the target language is greater here than at school, and much more can be done to help learners build up their linguistic repertoire. In fact, it is claimed that pupils attend ELT *frontistiria* not to do supplementary work, but to receive extensive first-hand knowledge (ibid., 1992: 5). In addition, due to the industrious efforts of many private institutions, Greece has developed a reputation for having children taught English earlier than any other country and generating an overwhelming candidature for the FCE exam. It is said that approximately 60%-70% of all takers come from the Greek private schools (Soars, quoted in Marseilles, 1990: 3).

Indeed, Greek society has a remarkable fixation on "examination success" and customer demand extends to all mainstream examinations, like TOEFL, FCE and CPE<sup>32</sup>. Obtaining this certification of language competence is particularly attractive because it serves as a kind of occupational investment. The certificates are recognised by the state as proof of the holder's knowledge of the language and permit them to find employment as teachers in the private sector or be entitled to a premium as employees of establishments such as banks, administration offices or travel agencies (Diamantidou, interview, March 1994).

The Greek private sector has become an important client in the British ELT industry as it buys more books than any other market. Also, for a significant proportion of the population, the *frontistiria* provide an easy route to employment and a secure income. The possibility of teaching English in the private sector is open to all who have obtained the CPE certificate<sup>33</sup> or are graduates of the English Departments at the universities of Athens or Thessaloniki. Thus, for a large percentage of the teachers who graduate from the Greek universities and are unable to find employment in the permanently over-inflated public sector, the *frontistiria* represent a crucial employment outlet. Unfortunately, for the average Greek family *frontistiria* are a heavy financial burden. The costs for registration and annual tuition fees, the

purchase of books and stationery, etc. add up to a substantial fixed expenditure which almost all Greek families must cope with for years. For example, in 1987 the sum of 2 billion drachmae was spent on First Certificate coursebooks and accompanying learning material (Marseilles, 1990).

In many respects, *frontistiria* function as commercial institutions (see Appendix M for samples of advertisement brochures), and as such, aim to ensure that their organisation, service, personnel, resources, and materials are as best suited to their clients' needs as possible. Some make use of technological aids such as videos or computers to reinforce learner motivation. Others, investing in the idea of authentic exposure to language, employ native speakers to teach or carry out 'conversation classes' during part of or the whole year. Many *frontistiria* owners show an interest in new (imported) methodologies (e.g. the Direct Method, the Natural Approach, and others) by using related textbooks and applying their basic principles in the classroom. This often functions as a effective marketing strategy, as the proclamation of a new methodology is considered a measure of modernity which confirms the customers' image of the X *frontistirio* as up-to-date, therefore a 'good' teaching and learning environment.

One of the *frontistiria* owners whom I spoke to while collecting data in Greece, made it quite plain that in her classes priority is given to mastering the English grammar on the grounds that the skill of communicating comes afterwards "*by itself*". Moreover, she stated that the mode of work in class is predominantly individualistic: "*Everybody works for himself, and everybody is checked and improved on individually*".

As it appears, the binding accountability and sense of obligation towards the clients plus the view that *frontistiria* are agents of high standards of delivery, acts as a driving force which determines the way teachers work and what seems to be the most appropriate teaching style. As explained by one teacher:



In Greece, the austere style is preferred. ...each pupil [works] autonomously and I am the controller. This is the best, because ... this is a private business and so control is very important, otherwise there would be chaos and people would take their children somewhere else.

As regards classroom practice, there is a general policy of placing pupils in classes according to their age and level of knowledge and keeping the number of participants small (i.e. not more than fifteen in one class). The composition of 'small-classes' is favoured because they permit maximal individual performance and also allow pupils to move about and work in groups with each other. Activities such as problem-solving tasks, games and written/oral presentations are thus easier to organise. However, the majority of *frontistiria* teachers have a particular style of teaching one step away from the way they themselves were taught. The results of research done by Bex & Peponi (1992)<sup>34</sup> indicate that in private teaching/learning contexts, teaching practice is found to conform to traditional formal modes. The textbooks that are imported from Britain and the USA for use in the *frontistiria* classes and which often prescribe skills- or task- based syllabi, are re-tailored to suit local teaching norms. The newly introduced materials and teaching approaches somehow fail to become a fully integral part of the respective instructional programs, thus manifesting what Holliday calls the phenomenon of *"tissue rejection"* (1994: 134).

In reality, teaching practice is little inspired by innovative models. Most teachers working in both rural and urban *frontistiria* have *"little or no encouragement to develop a genuinely communicative methodology within their classrooms"*... and tend to imitate the *"pre-communicative"* practices of the previous generation of teachers (Bex & Peponi, 1992: 10). Although *"many have heard of CLT and would say that they use it because they do some oral activities in class, their approach can be characterised in the main as traditional"* (Jones, S., personal communication). It is also affirmed that the pupils themselves *"are used to traditional role relationships and form-focused language teaching at their highly respected frontistiria"* (Karavas-Doukas, 1995: 63-64).

Thus, the work done in the classrooms is focused on systematically preparing pupils for a plethora of tests and examinations. Therefore, constant drilling/practice,

revision and testing are vital in the pursuit of success in the American/British English examinations. The pattern of the target examination sets the pattern and style of teaching (see Appendix N for an example of a pre-FCE syllabus outline).

#### **4.3.6.1 Assessment**

##### **The PALSO<sup>35</sup> Examinations**

The PALSO Examinations are a product of the Panhellenic Federation of Foreign Language School Owners and were developed in response to a widespread demand for a local, national FL assessment system, independent of the Cambridge and Michigan examinations; a 'home' product of objective and fair assessment of pupil performance (Appendix O). They first emerged in the private sector in 1980 and were intended to fulfil the following particular aims:

- to provide tests of common range for the Greek adolescents attending foreign language institutes which administer PALSO examinations,
- to organise examinations which would be objective and reliable,
- to help language school owners improve standards of performance in their pupils.

They are currently held twice a year, and are administered simultaneously and homogeneously throughout the country. University staff oversee the design of the various parts to the exam as well as the correction of the papers.

The PALSO certificate is currently more or less recognised both by the public and the Ministry of Education. In 1991 there were 75 000 candidates sitting for the exam, and the Ministry has indirectly encouraged public services to accept PALSO certificates as valid (Marseilles, 1992: 19). Despite the additional financial burden, parents encourage their children to take these examinations often in addition to the mainstream examinations, as a way of certifying the completion of a certain stage of learning.

In contrast to the public school setting, the work done in the private sector is said to be driven by a strong sense of commitment and shared expectations on the part of the parents, pupils and teachers. An *"emotional solidarity"* and the desire to promote

both national and individual interests by investing in ELT makes it work (Jones, S., personal communication).

#### 4.3.6.2 Problems with ELT in the private sector

However, this domain is not without its problems. As a result of the tremendous pressure for people to take the exams and get the certificate, *frontistiria* aim to get 'their' candidates to sit for the Cambridge FCE exam by age 14-15 or even earlier (Jones, S., personal communication). Inevitably, teachers and pupils become trapped in an examination frenzy, cramming too much knowledge in short-term memory, too fast, too soon. This status quo sustains a prevailing educational ethos that is described as "*unimaginative and dull, ...stuck in some late-Victorian time warp, where schools and parents persist in imposing an exam culture, training their children like so many Pavlovian Dogs to perform set tasks*" (Durrant, 1993: 23).

The ELT market appears to suffer from saturation, an influx of unqualified people, lack of a standard code of behaviour and even unfair competition among its members (Marseilles, 1992: 1). It has been pointed out that in some *frontistiria* the teachers who prepare classes for the FCE and CPE are less qualified than they should be. Complaints are also made by the Panhellenic Federation of Language School Owners<sup>36</sup> about individuals who, without being 'properly' qualified, pretend to be tutors and offer minimal service while being paid exorbitant amounts of money. There are also cases where *frontistiria* show far greater interest for the marketing side of their business instead of the educational side, for example, by circulating licit and illicit advertising material in which they offer beginner courses free of charge (Jones, S., personal communication).

Moreover, although it is believed that the general level of English in Greece is commendable, the performance levels of young candidates are not particularly high:

"Quite significantly, Greeks tend to underperform, in comparison with the rest of the world. In FCE they achieve something in the region of 55-60% but that level drops below 30% in CPE as against a rate of 55-60% for the rest of the world.... Roughly 10% of FCE candidates are capable of going on to do a Proficiency [exam]" (Hargreaves quoted in Marseilles, 1993: 10).

The success ratio in national and foreign language examinations is "*extremely discouraging for pupils and expensive for parents*" (Marseilles, 1994:1). It is maintained that, given the vast array of knowledge, teaching techniques, material, discussions, etc., given the huge amount of time and effort afforded to the teaching of English in Greece results are not as good as in other European countries, like Holland or Sweden, which are similar to the extent that they are small countries where there is a lot of exposure to English peripherally (Jones, S., personal communication).

#### 4.4 A short historical overview of education in Germany

German educationalists have long been preoccupied with the idea of the *all round* development of the individual (Hearnden, 1974). In the late 19th century, the realisation of a general education (*Allgemeinbildung*) was pursued through the study of Greek culture, particularly art and the literary works of the classical writers. In accordance with the educational principles of *Neuhumanismus*<sup>37</sup>, it was considered important to seek knowledge in depth by studying classical Greek literature and getting to know Hellenic culture. Equally important for the development of the mind was to train the young in thinking through formal grammar and it was held that a methodically implemented literary-aesthetical program would endow those leaving the education institutions with the means to function efficiently in society. Hence, the school program at secondary level was inspired by a 'neo-classical movement' whereby, in addition to subjects such as Natural Science, Maths, History and Geography, the Classics were taught as living languages. This composition of subjects became the approved educational framework for promising, affluent pupils and served as the knowledge base for university entrance.

During that time, admission into primary and secondary education was based upon social class distinctions. Methods and curricula made heavy demands on pupils and teachers, who strove to achieve a high intellectual profile. Teaching was highly formalised and there was a strong emphasis on factual content, tending towards encyclopaedism. Class norms signified uniformity and all were expected to meet specific standards of performance. The role of the teacher was to transmit knowledge in an authoritarian manner and the role of the pupils was to absorb it. From the elementary stage, pupils were expected to work for themselves alone and were forbidden to secure help or share results with their classmates. Moreover, all work was geared towards passing examinations, therefore schooling essentially involved drilling, memorisation and question-answer recitation (Hearnden, 1974). Due to this imposition of formalised teaching methods and rigorous assessment, strong criticisms were voiced against the educational institutions for suppressing independent thinking (ibid.: 22).

The years between 1809 and 1816 marked an important period of change in the Prussian education system, with the founding of the new University in Berlin and the introduction of educational reforms by the Prussian Minister Wilhelm von Humboldt. Issues such as the promotion of independent thinking through education, making the learning experience personal, keeping school in touch with real life, helping develop the inherent capacities and creative qualities of the child, etc. became a source of great scholarly interest. Humboldt maintained that a person cannot learn about the world by imitation or memorising. It was his conviction that self-induced inquiry, the conducting of "*research without a purpose*", reflective thinking and observation, were fundamental to educational attainment. Humboldt is reported to have stated that:

"the concern in teaching is not with the practical requirements of life but purely with ... knowledge for its own sake, with the cultivation of the feelings and in the longer term with the study of academic disciplines" (Hearnden, 1974: 18).

Consequently, he advocated the inclusion of a variety of subjects in the curriculum that would correspond to the needs as well as the natural curiosity of the young and emphasised individual self-determination and self-management for both teachers and pupils. These ideas and philosophical views on education were duly translated into teaching practice by school teachers who had been inspired by their studies in Philosophy.

Presently, the commitment to the classicist ideal waned in favour of a more progressive education. In 1882, Prussian curriculum regulations brought about innovations in the educational system as a whole. In addition to the study of literary subject matter, a much broader range of subjects was believed to contribute to the process of discovering 'truth'. It was considered useful and necessary not only to learn about the cultural and historical traditions but also to acquire scientific and technical knowledge. Thus, the need for a more practical orientation in the school program was recognised. The curriculum of the *Gymnasium*, for example, became diversified (e.g. Greek and Latin were truncated in favour of more French, Maths, Physics and Natural Science) and cast open to experimentation with new teaching plans and methods of instruction. Additionally, practical technical-vocational



training in schools such as the *Realschule* grew steadily in popularity and importance, and the number of *Realschulen* increased.

Following the establishment of the Weimar Republic in 1918, further steps were taken towards a more liberal education:

"[There] was a reform of more consequence than mere pedagogical manipulation of curricula and methods. It involved such instructional changes as natural consequences of a program declaring the right of every person to the amount and kind of education which would give most satisfaction to him [sic] personally and best fit him to function as a citizen in the new democracy" (Alexander & Parker, 1930: 269).

Clearly, the aim was to deliver social justice and offer equal opportunities to a broad segment of the population. In accordance with the new constitution, all children were acknowledged the right to receive an education. No child could be barred from school on account of social, economic, political or religious position. The only crucial condition was that each child entering the secondary school would prove able to do the type of work demanded.

The organisation of the curriculum was based on the principle of *integrated instruction*. That is to say, it was no longer desirable to teach subjects in isolation continually or to treat the pupil as a detached individual. A task undertaken for the study of Civilisation, for example, was complemented by information from History and Geography. Provision was made for increased pupil activity and co-operation within the classroom by emphasising the value of group effort. Activities were introduced that would allow the pupils greater freedom of choice and would "*widen each child's circle of interests by bring him in touch with many new and vivid experiences*" (Alexander & Parker, 1930: 283). Further, although the curriculum was prescribed by the central department of education, each school and each teacher had flexibility in deciding which units of work, what skills and knowledge would receive attention in their classes.

The desire to encourage freedom of individual development and to make the abilities and the interests of the child an integral part of the learning experience was backed

strongly by the middle and working classes. In response to public demand for a diversification of education, different types of school branched off from the classical *Gymnasium*. Apart from the *Realschule* (offering courses in Science, Mathematics and Modern languages), there was the *Realgymnasium* (where Western European civilisation was taught through Latin, French and English), the *Oberrealschule* (that focused on the Natural Sciences and Mathematics), the *Deutsche Oberschule* (specialising in modern subject-matter and German culture), and the *Frauenschule* (that held practical, pedagogical vocational courses for girls in the fields of social work, education of young children and youth welfare (Alexander & Parker, 1930). Meanwhile, the influence of the Church in matters of education declined.

When the National Socialist Regime came to power in 1933, education became highly centralised. All institutions were obliged to serve the purposes of nationalism and the school was placed at the service of an ideology which rejected the humanist-democratic philosophy of education. Intellectual capacity and achievement fell into second place, while political consciousness, physical fitness and personality qualities such as orderliness, obedience, comradeship, and leadership were highly valued and rigorously cultivated in the curriculum. The school system demanded the complete submersion of the individual in the process of educational nazification and the entire work of the schools was "*directed toward the ultimate application in war*" (Karsen, 1943: 334).

With the end of the war in 1945, came a period of 're-education' for the German people. Each of the four occupying powers, namely the United Kingdom (UK), the United States of America (USA), France and the former Union of the Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR), took up the responsibility of reshaping education in the areas of their jurisdiction. All four allies stressed the need to make education accessible to a larger section of society so as to raise the general level of education and they strongly supported the distribution of new textbooks that would contribute to the process of denazification.

Once again, the ideas of freedom, humanism and democracy became the pivotal points of educational reform. Educationalists turned to British, American and Swedish sources, drawing from their schemes in order to improve the substance of the school curricula. Common aims were: a) to help develop the valued talents of pupils and provide them with a broad foundation of knowledge and b) to encourage social and political freedom, peace and dignity, equality of the sexes and the formation of *personalities*.

However, the various sides had differences in policy concerning primary and secondary education. For example, the American committee recommended that schooling should consist of 6 years of primary school and 6 years of secondary school in consecutive levels, for all children. They proposed that the subject of Social Studies be introduced into the curriculum and that teaching methods should be employed that would encourage free discussion. Also, they pointed out that action should be taken to include parents and pupils in decisions regarding the internal organisation of the schools. The French on the other hand, were in favour of a policy whereby children would attend one type of secondary school with four sections branching out at the upper stage. They advocated the abolishment of Latin in the first three years of *Gymnasium* and the inclusion of a compulsory daily hour of French. Moreover, for the sake of standardisation and reliability, they prepared to organise a central system of assessment for the *Abitur* examinations in their sector, where papers would be read and graded by external examiners.

Measures such as the ones mentioned above began to be implemented in an ambiguous way. Educational policy at *Land* level was affected by immediate administrative requirements and rivalry with neighbouring *Länder* rather than by long-term planning. In addition, although there was a general agreement that the traditional educational system had strengthened authoritarianism in German society, there was strong resistance against a radical restructuring. The German authorities were unwilling to interfere with the long established character of the *Gymnasium* and the high academic standards it maintained.

In the years that followed, plans for the reorganisation of the educational system in the East and the West side of Berlin were handled quite differently. In the East there was a strong determination to transform educational policy rather than preserve it. An endeavour was made to make education less theoretical, hence a strong emphasis was placed on the applied, practical, vocational dimensions of the curriculum. Science and Technology subjects were prevalent in the school program. Moreover, there was a strong commitment to forming an education that would be more approachable to the working class and would channel their resources and ability in a direction which could coincide with the economic requirements of the state. Civic education was deliberately transformed in order to strengthen the link between education and the needs of the economy. With this in mind, a polytechnic, comprehensive curriculum was put into effect (Hearnden, 1974).

On the other hand, the West side was concerned with preserving the traditional educational heritage, i.e. the selective school system and the humanistic character of the *Gymnasium* curriculum. Research had indicated a desire for a greater equality of opportunity, but rather than aiming to restructure the whole system, the educational authorities (*Bildungsrat*) established that the same intermediate qualification should be awarded by all three types of school, (*Gymnasium*, *Realschule*, and *Hauptschule*) and that this qualification would allow access to whatever type of upper secondary education was desired. Emphasis was placed on bringing the *Realschule* and the *Hauptschule* up to standards that were comparable to those of the *Gymnasium*. Further, a concrete act of commitment to democratic and social equity was made with the introduction of the *Gesamtschule*, a comprehensive school. In other words, a comprehensive qualifications system as opposed to a comprehensive school system was developed. In this way, the maximum number of pupils would be encouraged to proceed to the *Abitur*, while the idea of the *Gymnasium* as being an avenue only for privileged pupils could be downplayed. Today, the preference of schooling at a *Gymnasium* continues to be strong but the influx of pupils from exclusively middle-class backgrounds has been reduced (Hearnden, 1974).



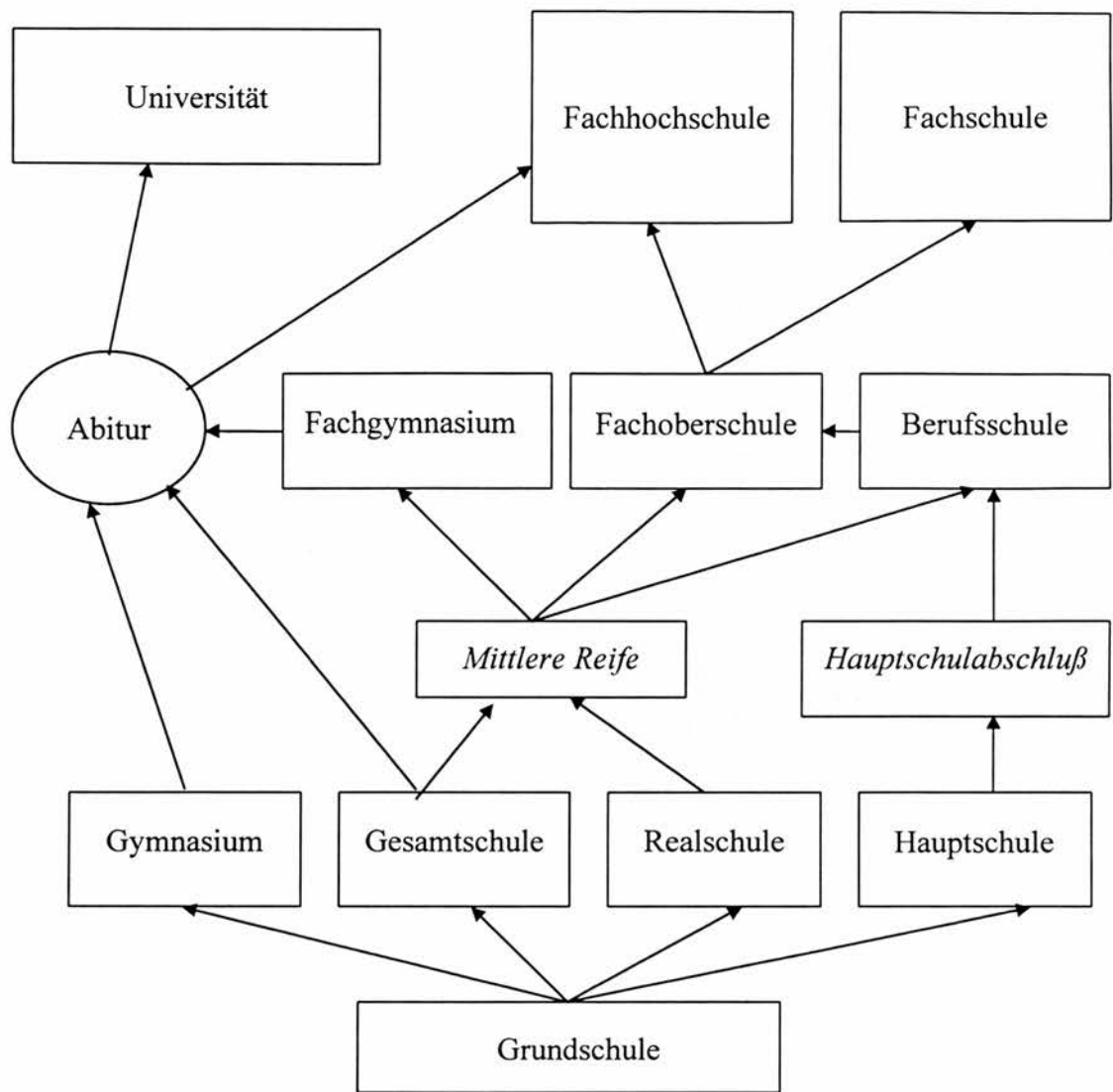
As regards methodology, teachers were encouraged to implement principles of *exemplarische* (paradigmatic) teaching/learning, first, by gearing the overall effort of teaching/learning towards cognitive modelling, that is, taking information from one subject and using it to understand or solve a problem in another subject, merging knowledge in order to make connections between subjects; second, by reducing the emphasis on details of facts in favour of perceiving overall developments, achieving holistic learning and the accumulation of general knowledge; third, by incorporating democratic features in the teaching process, primarily by encouraging pupils to contribute their thoughts, queries and ideas to the lessons.

Throughout the periods of change and reform of the 1900s, the idea of educating free-thinking, self-determining individuals has remained central. In this respect,..."*there is a general satisfaction that policy has been implemented well*" (Skilbeck, 1990: 30) and the modern German educational system is said to have presented a general image of educational well-being<sup>38</sup>.

#### **4.5 The structure of the German education system**

In accordance with a Federal Education plan, the general organisation of education and its reforms is broadly uniform. The basic education pattern, i.e. attendance at a primary school and continuation of studies at one of the four types of secondary school, applies in most *Länder* (federal states). There is uniformity in such issues as the subjects to be studied at primary and lower secondary level, the duration of schooling, the structure and subject composition of the *Abitur* and the recognition of professional and academic training (Holmes, 1983). However, the whole school system is subjected to differential supervision in the 16 German *Länder*<sup>39</sup>. Each *Land* exercises independent authority over the curriculum and handles numerous educational matters autonomously, including administration, teacher training and teacher assessment, employment of staff, the specification of the syllabus and the teaching material. Thus, the information provided in this chapter does not cover educational provision in Germany as a whole, but refers primarily to the official policy of the federal state of Berlin where the field work for this study took place.

Figure 5: The structure of the German education system



**4.5.1 Primary level (*Grundschule*)**

An early start with schooling can be made in the form of one year's optional pre-school education (*Vorklasse*). No actual teaching takes place at this stage, children are encouraged to play and co-operate with other children of different social or ethnic backgrounds. The aim is *"to introduce the children to the experience of being in a larger group and to prepare them for the work which awaits them at the Grundschule"* (Bergmann & Ziemer, 1992).



Primary education begins at the age of six and is compulsory up to the age of twelve years. Classes consist of up to 25 children. Subjects taught at primary level include: German, Mathematics, First Foreign Language, Science, Social Studies, Physical education, Art, Music. Particular emphasis on these subjects is given in the last two grades of primary school. In addition, it is compulsory that children attend at least ten lessons on road safety (*Verkehrserziehung*) every year. The choice of foreign language is made by the parents and Religious instruction is optional. Teaching concentrates on bringing together individuals to play and work together as groups (*Arbeitsgemeinschaften*), while simultaneously cultivating their individual strengths and interests. The organisation and implementation of the curriculum at primary level is specifically designed to support the idea of social efficiency. As Alexander & Parker (1930: 287) explain:

"From a blending of personalities group life attains higher levels than the individual could reach alone. Therefore, it is incumbent... to supply within the curriculum of the elementary school such a variety of the materials of learning as will be needed to fit the wants of all sorts of persons. Thus the school group and eventually adult society will be furnished a succession of distinctive personalities oriented according to their native abilities and well able to divide the problems of their group among themselves".

Classroom activities include writing reports, acting plays, drawing maps, making collections, etc. There are no official assessment procedures in the elementary school. Instead, pupils are marked according to their daily activity and written work. At the end of the sixth year of primary school, a decision has to be made concerning the pupils' transfer to secondary school. The teacher responsible for the class is required to write a report in which s/he proposes the type of secondary school that would be suitable for each child. The child's overall performance and potential, as well as his/her health and home conditions are taken into account before making the decision, which is then forwarded to the parents as a suggestion.

The figures on Primary education for the year 1993 indicate that a total of 3524,219 pupils (of which 49% female) were enrolled in 18,871 primary schools. The number of teaching staff was estimated at 225,068, and the teacher/pupil ratio was 1: 16 (UNESCO Statistical Yearbook, 1995).

#### 4.5.2 Secondary level (*Oberschule*)

The original secondary school was the classical *Gymnasium*<sup>40</sup>, which was first established in the 1800s to prepare boys for the learned professions. Today there are three traditional types of secondary school (*Oberschulen*) and one modern type of school to choose from, as shown below:

1. ***Gymnasium***: grammar school (academic secondary school).
2. ***Realschule***: intermediate school.
3. ***Hauptschule***: a new kind of general secondary school, (a development of the top classes of the *Volkschule* (elementary school)).
4. ***Gesamtschule***: comprehensive school (Hearnden, 1974: 259-263).

Education is compulsory between the ages of six and sixteen, so children have to attend primary school and the first four years of any type of secondary school. From then onwards they may either spend a further three years at the upper secondary level of the general secondary school in preparation for the *Abitur* exams, or alternatively, attend a part-time vocational school or a technical secondary school. Schooling is free in all general/vocational schools.

#### **The *Gymnasium***

The seven years of the *Gymnasium* are divided into two cycles. The first cycle corresponds to grades 7-10 and is referred to as the *Mittelstufe des Gymnasiums*, while the second cycle corresponds to grades 11-13, and is known as the *Gymnasiale Oberstufe*. A pupil may continue into the second cycle on the condition that their overall grades are sufficiently satisfactory. In Berlin, the *Gymnasium* absorbs approximately 45% of the school-going population.

The subjects studied include Mathematics, Chemistry, Physics, Biology, Geography, History/Social Studies, Physical education, Art, German, English. From the 7th grade onwards pupils are required to study a second foreign language and from the 9th grade they have to choose a course from the following options:

- a third Foreign Language,
- additional instruction in Mathematics, Data processing, or Natural Sciences,
- additional Physical Education,
- additional instruction in Music or Art.

The second cycle is broken down into *Kurshalbjahre*, literally meaning 'half-year courses' consisting of an introductory phase and a course phase. The course phase is subdivided into compulsory basic courses and advanced courses. The latter are optional and are taught to streamed groups. The syllabus is flexible and teachers are free to design their own lessons in any way they see fit.

At the end of the second or upper cycle of secondary school (*Gymnasiale Oberstufe*), the pupils sit for the *Abitur* examination. Successful passing of this exam enables the pupils to enrol at a university or to pursue a career in commerce or the civil service. Concerning the *Abitur*, a differentiation is made between general, subject-specific and *Fachoberschul* certificates (Mohr, 1990: 96):

- i) the general certificate allows one to study at any higher education institution without any limitations;
- ii) the subject-related certificate, specifies the subjects that can be studied at universities or other higher education institutions;
- iii) the *Fachoberschul*-certificate entitles the holder to study at *Fachhochschulen* and university-level *Gesamthochschulen*.

To obtain the *Abitur* certificate, candidates need to have performed well in their basic courses as well as in their optional advanced courses of the second cycle. Credits for 22 core courses (*Grundkursen*) and 8 optional courses (*Leistungskursen*) are calculated together and added to credits from the courses in the examination subjects for the final year. The credits that accumulate are added to the *Abitur* exam result and a minimum total of at least 280 points constitutes a pass. Each successful candidate is given a mark from 1 to 4+ which indicates his/her level of achievement.

## **The *Realschule***

The *Realschule* covers grades 7 to 10. At the end of grade 10, pupils may either obtain a school-leaving certificate, or they may transfer to the *Gymnasiale Oberstufe* in order to sit for the *Abitur*, if their grades are high enough. In addition to the core courses, four teaching periods a week are set aside for optional courses. These may be a combination of the following subjects:

- Mathematics/Natural Sciences
- a Second Foreign Language
- Economics/Social Studies
- German Literature/Art/Music
- *Arbeitslehre* (i.e. Pre-vocational studies, e.g. calculating, typewriting, consumer rights, homecraft, etc.)

Modern languages offered at the *Realschule* include English as a first foreign language, and French, Russian, or Turkish as an optional foreign/second language.

Those who get a school-leaving certificate from a *Realschule* may either seek employment, go on to a school for vocational training or transfer to an advanced vocational school that will prepare them for a technical college.

## **The *Hauptschule***

A small percentage of the school going population goes through this type of secondary school, which tends to be thought of as a place for underachievers. Part of the school policy is to provide more interdisciplinary instruction than the other types of secondary school and to emphasise pre-vocational studies.

Teaching groups number 16 to 18 pupils and there is a strong emphasis on remedial work for those who need it. Mathematics and English are offered at three ability levels. It is possible to obtain a school-leaving certificate at the end of grade 9, while an extended certificate is awarded at the end of grade 10 which can be complemented by a *Realschule* certificate if the pupil's overall performance proves to be commendable.

## **The *Gesamtschule***

This type of school was established in the late 1960s after criticism was voiced against the traditional tripartite system (*Gymnasium*, *Realschule*, *Hauptschule*) described earlier in the chapter, in §4.5.2. Amongst other arguments, it was maintained that there was a need for a school that would guarantee fair opportunities for all pupils, where each pupil should be allowed to develop according to his/her ability, and most importantly, where premature decisions about a child's school career would be avoided. A further aim was to abolish the six months' probationary period and to reduce the number of pupils who had to repeat a school year.

The *Gesamtschule* covers grades 7 to 10 and pupils are streamed according to ability. The curriculum of the *Gesamtschule* consists of a set of compulsory (core) subjects as well as a set of optional subjects which differ in content and aims according to the level of the pupils. For example, English (from grade 7) and German, Sciences and Mathematics (from grade 9) are taught at the following levels: advanced level (F), intermediate level (E), basic level (G), level for slow pupils (A). As with the *Realschule*, at the end of grade 10 a school-leaving certificate is awarded. However competent pupils may continue with their studies by transferring to the *Gymnasiale Oberstufe*.

### **4.5.3 Vocational/Technical schools**

Crafts and trade are respected and recognised fields. For all those who leave school to become apprentices, vocational education is compulsory. Pre-vocational education courses are offered in all types of secondary school except for the *Gymnasium*. Schools that offer vocational training maintain links with commercial or technical firms where trainees can approach staff and exchange ideas and information. Courses involve doing project work that relates to the production process of a particular firm or company, and the training program includes visits and practical work *on location*. For a pupil to become a trainee at a firm, s/he must apply in writing for an apprenticeship and attend an interview or sit an admission test before being accepted.



At a later stage, pupils are required to complement their training in a *Berufsschule*, *Berufsfachschule*, *Fachoberschule*, or a *Fachschule*.

The *Berufsschule* is a part-time vocational school for young people who leave school at class 10 and go on to do an apprenticeship. Instruction takes place in the workshop or factory where they are training, or at a school where they are taught according to a specific curriculum drawing on theory and expert knowledge. *Berufsfachschulen* are schools that pupils may transfer to after the end of the first secondary cycle. These schools cater specifically for professions in business, trade and social work. A minimum of one year's full time study is required.

Vocational education is available also at a higher level in the *Fachoberschule* where specific areas such as Mechanical Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Construction, Gardening, Nutrition and Home Economics, Cartography, etc. are studied for a period of two years. Trainees need to have a *Realschulabschluß* qualification. Finally, those who have already completed their apprenticeship and have accumulated some working experience, the *Fachschulen* are institutions where they have the opportunity to supplement their qualifications and update their knowledge at a technical and theoretical level. Again instruction concentrates on themes of practical interest.

In order to make the school system more unified, the possibility of transferring from one school to another is open to all pupils. Since 1901, the right of entry to higher educational institutions from all three kinds of secondary school has officially been recognised provided that certain requirements are met, namely, that a certificate of aptitude for higher education is awarded to the individual.

The figures for the year 1993 regarding intake of teachers and pupils at secondary level indicate that general secondary schools were attended by 5532,012 pupils, while the technical/vocational schools absorbed 2264,244 pupils (UNESCO Statistical Yearbook, 1995). The teaching staff in general secondary schools 408,663 with 112,647 teachers in the technical/vocational schools.



#### 4.5.4 Tertiary level

The close of the 10th year marks a potential leaving point when pupils may end their school careers at the age of 16. As a rule however, most continue at one of numerous higher education institutions that either prepare them for a wide range of professions or enable them to extend their studies in specialist subject areas.

Higher education institutions are all public, self-governing establishments and are classified into the following types:

- a) Universities and technical universities.
- b) Special subject colleges such as sports academies, teacher training colleges, colleges of art and music, etc.
- c) *Fachhochschulen*.

According to information given in the UNESCO Statistical Yearbook (1994), in the year 1991 a total of 1867,491 students were registered at higher education institutes in the Federal Republic. Admission to higher education studies is obtained by presentation of the *Abitur*, the secondary school certificate which confirms the entrant's aptitude for such studies (Mohr, 1990). It is reminded that the *Abitur* is obtained at the end of the upper secondary stage of a *Gymnasium* or a vocational school. Additional possibilities to obtain the *Abitur* are offered through other upper secondary vocational institutes such as *Beruffachschule* or colleges.

The academic year consists of two terms, a winter semester (from October to March) and a summer semester (from April to September). The time between terms is meant to be used for the preparation of seminars and examinations or for completion of practicals and examinations (van Resandt, 1991). The standard period for the duration of studies is eight or nine semesters, i.e. four years minimum, but often the general period of study extends to one or two years longer than the recommended time of completion. At *Fachhochschulen* degree programs normally last eight semesters.

The courses of study in the Universities and the technical Universities cover the subject areas of Philology, Cultural studies, Law, Mathematics, Economics, and Social Sciences. Also, one can undertake studies in Natural Sciences, Medicine, Agricultural and Forest Sciences, Food Sciences, Engineering, Fine Arts and Sports. Courses in the first five semesters are usually more general than the ones that follow, which become increasingly more specialised. Instruction takes the form of lectures, seminars, practical courses, projects and excursions. In most subject areas, an intermediate examination known as the *Vordiplom* is also taken. In order to complete the main studies students are required to submit a dissertation on their major subject as well as sit for written/oral examinations in all the subjects taken (International Guide to Qualifications in Education, 1991).

A basic characteristic of the tertiary sector is the principle of "*academic freedom*" (International Guide to Qualifications in Education, 1991: 323). That is to say, students may attend the university that they prefer, change universities midway, organise and complete course work autonomously, etc. Students are also free to decide when to take their final examinations and, as they may take the time they need to prepare themselves, the duration of their studies is usually prolonged.

#### **4.6 English language instruction in German secondary schools**

##### **4.6.1 The status of English in German society**

The English language in the Federal Republic of Germany serves as an international medium of communication in the domains of economics, politics, management and administration, and in most areas of scientific research (Bausch *et al.*, 1989: 305). It is recognised as the most widely used language in the domains of commerce, technology and tourism, and rates high on parental choice of foreign language to be taught at schools. An early exposure to the English language is achieved particularly through travel and increased social contact with English-speaking communities. English also plays an important role in socio-cultural life: numerous radio programs are broadcast in English, films are shown in their original versions, English slogans regularly appear in the media and in commerce, particularly in advertising, and

English-language television programs are transmitted via Cable channels. Cultural events such as music or theatre performances staged in English are also quite common, particularly in the large cities.

For many German people the learning of English is associated with geographical mobility, career opportunities and success in the business world. For some, the knowledge of a foreign language such as English is considered "*a part of the continuation of one's all-round education*" (Moegelin, 1994). For others, the motivation to learn English is primarily instrumental as the language is seen as the essential *lingua franca*:

"in view of the increasing internationalisation of social life and the spread of English in jobs and at leisure, almost everyone finds him/herself in the position to have to use English..." (Bausch *et al.*, 1989: 306).

For the German speaker, English is relatively easy to learn because of its relatedness to the German language, that is to say, many features of the English morphology and syntax are recognisable to a German learner (Bausch *et al.*, 1989). A broad range of vocabulary is easily acquired either because of a common Germanic source or as a result of the assimilation of technical or sociocultural elements of the language. English loan words (such as cornflakes, frisbee, family, tennis, etc.) are usually already a part of a school beginner's vocabulary.

#### **4.6.2 The teaching of English as a foreign language in the state sector**

English has been a part of the compulsory core curriculum since the Hamburg Agreement of Cultural Ministers in 1964. English is the first modern foreign language in general and vocational schools and for many school-goers it is the only foreign language they learn. The 1985/86 statistics on the position of foreign languages in general secondary schools show that English rates the highest with 77.4%, followed by French 21.4% and Spanish (*Statistisches Bundesamt*). French, Russian, Spanish or Latin are offered as a second foreign language in specifically designated schools. Where the first foreign language is French, Russian, Turkish or Latin, English becomes the compulsory second foreign language.

In the general secondary schools of the Federal Republic there is a common approach to the variety of English that will be taught according to each *Land*. The varieties preferred are standard British English or American English. In all types of school, the teaching of the English language (or indeed any other foreign language) includes the study of the culture, history and geography of the relevant country. As a rule, the more advanced the level of English instruction, the more authentic idiomatic language and specific socio-cultural knowledge regarding Great Britain and the USA are incorporated into the course.

Apart from the general and vocational schools, Universities and adult training centres, English is also taught in a number of commercial language schools located in urban areas. Their clients tend mostly to be employees of private firms who wish to update their knowledge of English for specific purposes (Bausch *et al.*, 1989).

#### **4.6.3 The Berlin FL curriculum**

As stated in the foreword of the document, the overall purpose of the ELT program is manifold:

"to develop in the pupils an internationally applicable means of communication, to prepare them for contact with the English language in their free time as well as in their profession,... to familiarise pupils with facts about foreign language areas through which their individual breadth of experience will increase, and to foster an understanding and tolerance towards foreign cultures" (see Appendix P for the original *Rahmenplan*).

It appears that the curriculum planners place special value on projecting the foreign language as a useful tool for life. A particular reference to the aim of the English lessons of the secondary level (Niveau I<sup>41</sup>) indicates that the instruction of English is primarily geared towards fostering communicative ability where oral communication skills are most important, without however neglecting other forms of foreign language use such as reading and writing.

The Niveau I and II constitute a prescriptive framework within which teachers can orient their classwork and offer variation that would cater for specific pupil needs

and interests. For all secondary schools it is obligatory that language teaching incorporates the learning aims of the Niveau I, so that the fundamental grammatical structures and the basic vocabulary are acquired by the 10th class (§4.5.2). At the more advanced Niveau II, higher standards of correctness and the ability to use more complicated oral and written expressions is desirable. However, there is no specification of concrete learning aims for the two levels due to the diversity of teaching materials in use, especially the textbooks. The event of replacing or adapting topics or activities for pupils who might be more or less competent in English, is left up to the teachers to manage as they see fit.

The curriculum has been drawn up to determine the general objectives and specifications of what pupils should eventually be able to do by the end of four years' study, i.e. from class 7 to 10. Apart from the indication that the lesson material in class 7 continues from the point that was reached at the end of class 6 in the primary school, no other mention of the pupils' competence level at the start of secondary school is made and there is no detailed description of an expected rate of progress. It is stated that pupils who have come from different primary schools should all be brought to the same level of competence within the first half year. The curriculum stipulates also that certain grammatical structures have to be known by all pupils by the end of the 8th class, regardless of the type of school they attend (Appendix P, *Rahmenplan* §4.5.3). A list of the 'core' grammar items is included, such as: *Pronouns*: personal, possessive, relative, interrogative, etc.; *Verb Tenses*: simple present, past, future, present perfect, present progressive, past progressive, etc.; *Prepositions*: (spatial): about, across, against, at, etc.; (and temporal): after, ago, at, before, until, etc.

Certain goals are defined more narrowly for the different types of schools. Specifically, in the *Hauptschule* the kind of work done in the classroom should provide the pupils with practice in basic structures and vocabulary which they should be able to manipulate orally and in writing. In the *Realschule* attention should be paid to the independent treatment of texts, to the exhaustive treatment of theme areas and to exercising the different sub-skills for the development of oral and writing



competence. Work done in the *Gymnasium* should be determined by the additional requirements of the Niveau II, which involves dealing with more complicated features of the language.

The document contains three inventories, one consisting of a compilation of topic areas for speaking activities or discussion, one designating linguistic expressions and their corresponding functions, and one listing the grammatical structures to be mastered. The inventory of topic areas to be explored in the foreign language is given together with a variety of situations about which information can be exchanged in the classroom, for example:

<b>In town</b>	
In the street	asking and telling the way people in the street accidents window shopping etc.

It is up to the teacher to introduce such themes when a suitable point in the lesson is reached. The inventory of expressions together with their language functions is made up of 26 categories that are identified as 'basic expressions' for the Niveau I or 'alternative expressions' for Niveau II. For example: the function "*expressing one's view*" is accompanied by the following expressions:

<b>Niveau I</b>	<b>Niveau II</b>
I think...	In my opinion...
From my point of view....	I'm convinced that...
	People shouldn't...
	You can't...
	If I were you I'd...
	Probably he...
	That's just what I... etc.

It is explained that any such expressions should be taught together with their functions and "*should be embedded in communicative situations whereby the teacher is required to make the expressions available through constant exercises*", thereby



ensuring that most of the pupils can participate in communication within the group at a basic level. It is claimed that such exercises ensure repetition of previously practised material and can help pupils grasp the notion of using one structure to express one or more speech functions. The kinds of language functions and structures to be learnt are more concretely determined by the contents of the textbook in use, which is also designed on the basis of the curriculum guidelines. At the end of the document, all the grammatical structures are listed once again with examples and explanations regarding their formulation.

Pupils are encouraged to develop all four basic skills but particular attention is paid to speaking and comprehension, since these are needed to participate in conversations with others and understand what is being said. The learning aims for speaking require that, at the minimum,

"pupils should be able to express themselves, to give information and to react to questions. For this they should learn basic vocabulary, activate a variety of structures and make use of the most frequently used idiomatic expressions, which should be practised continually. As pupils should be in a position to ask for information or give information with the help of a dictionary, they should become familiar with the International phonetic symbols".

In addition, an outline of the learning aims for each of the four basic skills, together with an enumeration of sub-skills and suggested ways of advancing them is provided in some detail. For example, for the development of listening skills at Niveau I it is outlined that:

"pupils should be able to understand and react orally to listening material which is eventually connected to visual, gesticular and other information. The contents of the listening practice should relate to the given selection of thematic units and previously taught structures, idiomatic expressions and words. Discrimination of accents and the register of intonation patterns as well as word and sentence stress must be encouraged and constantly expanded" (see Appendix P, §2.3.1, 4.2.3.1).

Hints and suggestions on the teaching procedure appear throughout the document, such as *"the starting point of the lesson should be to exploit everyday situations where problems are discussed and the pupils are encouraged to make personal statements"* (Appendix P, §2.3.1-2.4.2) but a particular methodology is not imposed on the teachers. Teachers are given a set of criteria for the selection of teaching

materials where the importance of using authentic forms of spoken and written language is emphasised (Appendix P, §4.4.2.). Moreover, in order to encourage activities that could combine learning with pleasure, a list of literary material that may be used in the classroom as well as a list of titles of simplified readers such as R. L. Stevenson's *Treasure Island* are supplied.

Emphasis also seems to be placed on the cultural aspects of the native British or American English-speaking contexts. This non-linguistic dimension of 'cultural enrichment' is expressed as a learning aim according to which, in addition to sustaining their interest for the language throughout the course, pupils should be encouraged to find out more about the country and people whose language they are learning, to cultivate tolerance towards the foreign habits and ways of behaviour (see Appendix P, §2.2.2, 4.4.3). The importance of being open towards the foreign culture and maintaining an unprejudiced attitude is also mentioned in other sections of the curriculum. Further, objectives as concerns pupil behaviour in the classroom are designated, whereby pupils should be encouraged to show tolerance and mutual respect towards each other, and they should be able to work independently as well as do tasks that require pupil-pupil collaboration (Appendix P, §2.1.1.- 2.1.4.).

#### **4.6.3.1 Materials provision**

The basic textbooks for use in class are supplied by a number of private publishing companies (Schroedel, Cornelsen, Klett, and others) that are based in Berlin. There are over ten publishers collaborating closely with the Senate for Education and are responsible for the planning, design and production of series of school books for all the subjects in the curriculum, including English. A list of the approved publications is made available to the teachers who then choose the ones they find most appropriate for their classes. The books used by the teachers of this study were *Learning English Green Line 4*, *Learning English Red Line 4*, and *English H4*<sup>42</sup>.

It is explicitly stated in the teaching guides that in abiding by their textbooks teachers adhere to what is formally stated in the curriculum/syllabus<sup>43</sup>. Moreover, it is noted

that in every unit the most important communicative aims are carried out (*Green Line*: contents page). This implies that there is compatibility between materials and predetermined objectives.

A variety of types of exercises for the development of the receptive and productive skills are given in a particular sequence. In *Green Line 4*, which is taught in the *Gymnasium*, the practice of reading and listening comprehension is pursued first, while gradually pupils are encouraged to produce their own language by asking questions, partaking in dialogues and at a later stage integrating vocabulary and grammar items into their existing language reserve by engaging in free conversation and role play.

In *Red Line 4*, which is used in the *Realschulen*, it is maintained that there is no clear division of the skills to be developed. Listening and oral activities take place mainly in the lesson, while written exercises in the workbook complement whatever is done in class. Specifically, language practice is meant to start with the treatment of texts in class, followed by various exercises focusing on oral or written comprehension questions. Further practice is provided by means of translation and grammar and vocabulary exercises, which pupils undertake to do independently in their workbooks.

*English H4* has been especially tailored to cater for pupils in heterogeneous groups with different learning tempos. In *English H4* the "activation, reactivation and repetition" of known language material is considered more important than the teaching of new language items (Preface: 4). Apart from the practice of known material, priority is given to the listening- and reading-comprehension skills as well as the independent treatment of short texts (reading and answering comprehension questions). As far as the speaking skill is concerned, it is considered unrealistic to expect grammatical correctness in the pupils' statements, therefore errors should be tolerated. A basic criterion is that the language produced would be understood by a native speaker (Preface: 7).

The themes and texts in *English H4*, *Green Line 4* and *Red Line 4* are created to reflect pragmatic, real-life situations. Texts are sequenced and varied (with stories, advertisements, feature articles from newspapers, etc.) and very close in appearance to the kinds of texts aimed at a native-speaker audience, which means that they are authentic-like. Clearly, they make the language accessible to the pupils in meaningful contexts.

The issue of providing alternative exercises/tasks is treated in similar ways in all three coursebooks. The amount of work to be covered in *English H4* is the same for all pupils but there is a very differentiated range of exercises which demand different working techniques for advanced and weaker pupils. For example, there is a revision section which can either be allocated to a group of pupils or omitted depending on how compelling it is to reinforce the taught material. There are also more difficult exercises and reading texts which require a greater grasp of grammatical structures and demand greater pupil autonomy. In *Green Line 4* and *Red Line 4* the exercises are intended for all pupils but cover a great variety of tasks at various grades of difficulty (i.e. listing facts, finding the turning-point of a text, giving summaries, discussing the contents of a text, comparing it with personal experiences). For weaker pupils requiring special assistance, extra material is available for them to work on with the help of their teacher.

#### **4.6.3.2 Assessment procedures**

The number of tests that are set in a school year depends on the number of hours devoted to the subject per week. Thus, for example, the 7th and 8th grades which have 5 hours of English per week are required to write between 5 to 9 tests per year, while the number of tests to be written is reduced by 2 in the 9th grade where English is taught 4 times a week.

Assessment of the pupils' learning progress involves the checking of listening and reading skills, speaking and writing skills and use of vocabulary and grammar. Assessment procedures are modelled on the recommendations made for the

development of the basic skills, as specified in the objectives (Appendix P, *Rahmenplan* §4.2.3). A distinction is made between 'group-internal' and 'overall' means of assessing pupil progress and performance. The former consists of continual observation of pupil activity during the lessons, as well as the setting of regular class tests on sub-skills, both of which inform to what extent the learning aims are being achieved. The latter refers to standard, published tests or examination papers drawn up by teachers who teach the same class levels. These tests are based on the obligatory learning aims for all the pupils and are considered to have more objective standards of assessment, making it possible to establish the extent to which classes are reaching the specified objectives.

Teachers draw up their own tests and tailor them to the needs and abilities of each individual class. In designing these tests, they are advised to make use of a variety of techniques that aim to assess oral and writing skills, including:

- recognition of the meaning of words and marking of multiple choice exercises.
- gap-filling tasks.
- recognition of structures and multiple choice or right/wrong activities.
- naming of visually presented items and situations.
- re-ordering of words in sentences etc.

Again, teachers are advised to pay particular attention to accuracy with classes that are at the advanced level (Niveau II). All written papers are of decisive importance in the writing of reports of pupils' progress.

#### **4.6.4 Teacher training and qualifications**

The teacher training system has been uniform in all Berlin universities since 1991. Trainees are expected to follow a core program at University consisting of courses in the Philosophy and History of Education, Methodology, Didactics, and also includes a basic course in Philosophy, Sociology or Political studies. Additionally, trainees are required to complete three so-called 'blocks' of practical training during the course of their studies, each of which lasts four weeks. In particular, teacher trainees are exposed to 12 weeks of school life where the first block consists of an



introductory "*Orientierungs Block*", and is followed by two blocks of non-participant observation and teaching.

Teachers obtain their formal qualifications subsequent to their success in two official state examinations. In order to end their theoretical studies at University, pupils have to pass the First State Examination for Teachers, (*1. Staatsexamen*), which consists of a written thesis on the first or second major subject, written and oral examinations on the subjects of the particular type of school chosen, an examination in pedagogy and in one other optional subject. They then embark on a pre-service preparation phase lasting two years (*Referendariat*). During this time they work in schools as civil servants with probationary status. They are required to teach a given number of hours at a school parallel to attending lectures and seminars that focus on issues such as school regulations, legal procedures, first aid, drug abuse, incorporation of audio-visual aids in the classroom, etc. Also, they have to observe demonstration lessons given by their tutors and be observed by them when they take over a class at a designated secondary school.

At the end of this two-year period, they sit for the Second State Examination for Teachers (*2. Staatsexamen*) where they are examined on educational theory and practice. The aim of these examinations is to establish whether the prospective teacher is capable of dealing with an unknown problem that is posed to him/her within a short period of time (van Resandt, 1991). Both state examinations are controlled by the Berlin Ministry of School Education, Vocational Training and Sport.

Depending on the specialist subject areas that they study and the type of school they wish to teach in, teachers are given specific qualifying titles. That is to say, a teacher may obtain a qualification with a specialisation in one or two subjects for grades 1 to 10. S/he may obtain a qualification to work with pupils with special learning difficulties, or obtain a qualification to teach from grades 1 to the *Abitur*. The most common degree programs taken up by prospective teachers include:



- teaching at *Grundschulen*, *Hauptschulen* and *Realschulen*, or at primary and secondary level I.
- teaching at *Gymnasien* or at secondary levels I and II.
- teaching at technical/vocational schools at secondary level II.
- teaching at special schools (van Resandt, 1991: 156).

As civil servants, teachers are required to serve the state in case of emergency and have no right to strike. They may inform themselves about methods and matters relevant to the subjects they teach by attending short in-service seminars at intervals during the course of the school year. For this purpose, a prospectus is published twice a year by the Ministry, in which 700 courses are available to choose from on a variety of topics. In-service courses are attended on a voluntary basis and approximately 10-12 000 teachers of all subjects participate in these courses each half-year (Bergmann & Ziemer, 1992).

#### **4.6.5 Teacher status**

There is a general consensus that foreign languages in the curriculum are just as important as all other primary subjects. Setting individual differences aside, teachers of English are respected and are expected to fulfil the same qualitative criteria as other colleagues. Therefore, the status of FL teachers can be said to be equal to that of teachers of other subjects.

#### **4.7 A brief appraisal of the two education systems**

I would delineate some of the basic characteristics of the German and Greek educational systems as follows:

In the German system of education, power is divided between the central federal government and the sixteen states (*Länder*). There is decentralisation at a national level with a common base, i.e. the autonomy of the individual states is particularly strong in the structure and administration of schools but the system is centralised in specified areas, such as general educational policy and planning, curricular

guidelines, vocational training, etc. Education is planned and directed on the basis of a co-operative relationship between the central federal government and local communities.

The curriculum reflects a balanced program of study with a theoretical and a practical orientation; it helps channel individuals towards diverse fields of study that correspond with their own interests and inclinations and also satisfies demands in the labour market. The social organisation of the schools introduces many elements of self-government and supports a learning environment that allows for active learning and collaboration.

There is a tight co-ordination of instruction, assessment and feedback and a high degree of teacher accountability at all levels. Careful budgeting ensures that there are sufficient financial resources to provide schools with a variety of appropriate teaching aids and materials.

The Greek educational system is centralised to the extent that all its components, i.e. the concept of education, the method of training and recruitment of staff, the teaching culture, the organisation, operation and management of the schools, etc. are very much the same all over the country and have remained unchanged over many years.

The curriculum is built into an inflexible, concentrating educational system that is impervious to innovation and change and, as a consequence, shows a lack of adaptability to the changes in the labour market. There is little possibility of systematic planning that could bring about favourable innovation or qualitative changes in the curriculum and in teaching (Ministry of Education, 1995). Moreover, the curriculum is overloaded and outdated, it emphasises memorisation against critical thought (*ibid.*, 1995) and endorses 'packed and packaged' syllabi which reward convergent or conforming behaviour, discouraging initiative, divergent thinking and questioning and omitting the exploration of relationships between theoretical knowledge, personal opinion and social reality (Skilbeck, 1990: 38; Kourvetakis & Doblatz, 1987). For example, the typical History lesson is described

as a thirty-minute lecture (the contents of which must be learnt off by heart for the next day), with no analysis of events, no questioning, no interpretation, no discussion of the facts. Likewise, Mathematics teaching is "*based heavily on verbally loaded procedures*" (Hatzichristou & Hopf, 1992: 290). The same can be said about the teaching of Science, where teaching is formal and instructional and the basic requirement is factual recall (Boyce & Spiliotopoulou-Papantoniou, 1993).

The school system suffers from a weak technical-economical infrastructure, thereby affecting the quality of education provided. At the same time, the presence of *frontistiria* and private tuition which prepare pupils in subjects such as Maths, Physics, Chemistry, and Classical Greek for the university entrance examinations is formidable. It is now common for pupils to start attending courses at *frontistiria* two to three years before entering the secondary level, in preparation for the subjects that they will be taught. Likewise, it is almost indispensable for pupils to attend foreign language institutes which prepare them for commercial foreign language examinations like the French *Sorbonne* or the English First Certificate (Postlethwaite, 1988). The educational policy following the 1977 reforms clearly failed to slacken the people's reliance on the *frontistiria*, as was hoped would happen. While the socio-economic gains of Greek education are seriously impaired by limited funding and mass education, in effect, education bears a price in every sense of the word.

These characteristics build up a picture of a system with certain "*urgent problems awaiting solution*" (Kannelopoulos, 1996: 65; OECD, 1997). It is therefore not surprising that, in step with "*a widespread concern across countries for the overall quality of learning in classrooms ...where questions of accountability of the education service are raised*" (Skilbeck, 1990: 8), there is currently a grave concern about Greek educational policy and the quality of educational provision at all levels.

#### **4.8 A summary comparison of English language teaching in Greece and Germany**

In both countries, English is actively present in different domains of society and there is an interest in promoting the language in school as a fundamental part of one's basic knowledge. ELT holds a stable position in formal education and its general usefulness and importance is unquestionable.

The reviews of the Greek and German curricula have revealed certain common properties and some differences. The two documents emphasise the development of communicative competence as a primary target, and advocate language teaching for communication in social situations. The documents designate the broad and specific goals of the curriculum by means of prescriptive definitions and inventories of structures, topics and functions to be mastered, which correspond to the pupils' needs. There is no specified rate of progress. The curricula serve as blueprints for the textbooks used in class.

The German document, however, stipulates the core structures to be mastered by grade 8 and contains a very detailed inventory of topics and structures with a careful gradation of sub-skills and lexical items. It places equal weight on the development of accuracy and fluency (grammatical and sociolinguistic competence), with accuracy gaining in importance as courses advance to the Niveau II. Moreover, it lays greater stress on the discovery and understanding of the target society and calls for the integration of the target language culture in the instruction process. Specific reference is made to the exploitation of supplementary reading materials. The document also sets the conditions for a rigorous and variable assessment procedure.

The objectives of the Greek ELT curriculum are expressed in a verbalistic mode and in some parts fall short of clear-cut explanations and examples. The mastery of socio-functional behaviour (sociolinguistic competence) is brought much more into play, and there is an overriding concern for developing fluency. Assessment follows the guidelines of a general model which is static and not particularly rigorous.

Two factors, namely teacher status and training appear to be markedly different. In public schools, Greek teachers of English, as a body rather than as individuals, are bequeathed with a weak position from the outset and face *a priori* low expectations though these may bear no relation to their capacities, potential and personal aspirations. In contrast, German teachers appear to have a strong power-base upon which they can build a psychologically safe environment and go about the business of teaching without having to struggle to gain esteem and authority.

The pre- and in-service training of teachers in Greece is based on a broad theoretical foundation, is largely non-school based and appears to be lacking in the transmission of practical teaching skills. German teachers receive adequate pre-service education and training, with strong emphasis on the application of pedagogical approaches and principles. Additionally, through their studies they derive knowledge which is appropriate to their subject specialisation and the type of school they will work in.

Though officially Greek teachers of English are pointed in the direction of Communicative Language Teaching, as a rule, they construct their own lesson plans, control the workload and assess the progress of their classes independently. As material means and support are limited, Greek teachers are obliged to work with one textbook which is used by all classes of the same grade in all schools.

German teachers of English are generally encouraged to employ any methodology or approach which suits their style and their teaching purposes and are granted flexibility in their work through the use of a variety of materials and strategies. They are able to select the material they wish to teach from different books and other approved teaching aids.

#### **4.9 Summary**

This chapter presented an overview of the developments in education in Greece and Germany from the 1800s onwards. The reforms and philosophical orientation of the two systems were delineated and a description of the structure and operation of the present educational systems was provided, with separate references to the primary,

secondary and tertiary levels. Further, an account of the status of English in society was given, as well as a report on the conditions of ELT provision in Greece with particular reference to both the state and private sectors. The description of the German education system narrowed down to information on ELT provision in the federal state of Berlin. The ELT profiles of the respective contexts included data on the curriculum, teacher qualifications, materials provision, resources and assessment.



## CHAPTER FIVE: Research Design and Implementation

The preceding chapters reviewing the literature on educational evaluation and classroom interaction, and surveying the general educational background and developments in ELT in the target-countries, constitute the wider framework for this study. This chapter focuses on central methodological issues, thereby presenting a detailed account of the research design and its implementation.

### 5.1 Rationale

Classroom research has attracted considerable attention in recent years, but there is yet not enough descriptive evidence on the dynamics of teaching and learning in foreign language classrooms (van Lier, 1988; Pica, 1989; Johnson, 1995). Descriptive research in this area is a much needed, pedagogically relevant source of naturalistic data. It is particularly valuable in that it endeavours to respond to real concerns about teaching and learning: to illuminate those features that have a positive impact on classroom reality and language development and to help us understand the limitations imposed by practical problems (such as the management of heterogeneous/large classes). As a research tool, ethnographic observation<sup>44</sup> has the capacity to illuminate the processes associated with classroom life and can contribute towards a more concrete and authentic framework of knowledge from within. Also, it effectively serves the purposes of an evaluation that looks into educational processes and participant perspectives.

In the domain of education within the Greek context, classroom research has only lately become a matter of serious concern -with examples of most recent work being those of Karastathi-Panagiotou (1987)<sup>45</sup> and Altani (1992)<sup>46</sup>. The range of studies conducted so far in Greece with respect to issues of foreign language education is limited, as has already been shown in Chapter One, §1.4. In view of the fact that English language education is available to the vast majority of the school-going population and is an essential part of the national provision for education, a closer

examination of the current conditions of FL instruction in the Greek state sector is believed to be worthwhile.

## **5.2 Scope and aims of research**

The scope of this research concerns foreign language teaching in the Greek and German secondary school classrooms and the manner in which English lessons are 'accomplished' (Mehan, 1979). Though it is true that a comparison of two different educational systems is perhaps dangerous to do especially when making direct generalisations, a comparison of selected aspects within those systems is deemed useful because it allows salient characteristics and differences to emerge which may then be interpreted in the light of the particular social framework of the respective education systems and societies.

The present research focuses on the social context of language teaching and learning. The social context is identified as *"the social interaction... within and around the classroom which affects and therefore helps explain what really goes on"* (Holliday, 1994: 11). The study extends to a description of the social context in and around the classroom because *"much of what goes on within the classroom is influenced by factors within the wider educational institution, the wider educational environment and the wider society"* (ibid.), and because it is believed that a deeper understanding of the social forces acting upon local settings and affecting language teaching may lead to answers about what works in the classroom, what doesn't and why, and what needs to be better managed.

The aims of this study are as follows:

1. To seek evidence for the claim that English language instruction in the Greek secondary state schools is unsatisfactory (see Chapter One, §1.4).
2. To carry out an investigation which will be informative on how English language teaching is carried out in Greek state secondary schools.

3. To involve the central actors of the language learning context, i.e. teachers and pupils, and to tap their perceptions of the quality of English language instruction as well as their role and contribution to the teaching and learning process.

My immediate objectives are:

- (i) with data derived directly from the classroom, to provide a descriptive account of the teaching process in each of the lessons observed.
- (ii) to elicit the views and opinions of the participants about the proceedings of their language lesson and how they perceive their roles within it.
- (iii) to examine the role that teachers and pupils play in the management of interaction.
- (iv) to compare and contrast data from the Greek classes with data derived from the German comparison sample, since it is only possible to tell whether one set of language lessons is better, worse or different in certain respects from another by means of comparison.

In short, the idea is to capture an 'inside view' of how teaching and learning takes place, how participants construct their classroom reality and how they react to it.

My subsequent objectives are:

- (i) to examine the evidence that exists with regard to the prevailing idea that English lessons in the state schools are ineffective.
- (ii) to look for explanations of classroom phenomena under the existing conditions and practices of the Greek educational system and Greek social reality.
- (iii) to produce a report that will be useful for the context in question, i.e. contain recommendations for improvement.

### **5.3 The research questions**

The thesis sets out to answer the following global question:

**What evidence is there to support the long-standing claim that the teaching of English in Greek state secondary schools is 'unsatisfactory'?** (the meaning of this value statement is treated in § 5.4).

The above general question is sub-divided into a total of twelve (12) research questions (1-3= contextual questions; 4-12= process questions) and constitute the sources from which appropriate evidence is derived. The questions are covered in Chapters Four, Six and Seven.

### **5.3.1 The contextual questions**

A number of contextual (or presage) variables, or what goes *into* the instruction process, need to be addressed as they too are part of the full range of activities which take place in the implementation of a program and influence the educational setting (Tyler, 1967; Allwright, 1991; Holliday, 1994). For the purpose of this study, the impact of contextual variables upon the teaching/learning process are examined via the following contextual questions:

1. What are the characteristics of the pupils who are involved in this study?

Specifically:

What age group do they represent?

What is their social background?

What are their attitudes towards learning English?

What is their level of competence in English?

2. What are the characteristics of the teachers whose lessons were observed?

In particular:

In which gender and age categories do they belong?

What is their sociocultural background?

What are their teaching qualifications?

What kind of pre-service or in-service teacher training have they received?

What are their attitudes towards teaching English?

3. What are the features of the schools being attended by the sample of informants?

More precisely:

What is the reputation of the schools?

What is the size and wealth of the schools?

What resources or facilities are available?

What languages are offered in the curriculum?

What is the FL policy of the schools?

### 5.3.2 The process questions

Before presenting the next set of research questions I would like to put forward the following basic premises regarding the classroom context:

- a) Instruction is an interactive and social activity. It is a process involving a direct interplay between the pupil, the teacher and their human and material environment.
- b) The classroom is a dynamic setting where teacher and pupils act in relation to one another in a structured and systematic fashion. The class as a group forms a formal structure in which members are assigned roles and positions, and within this formal organisation an informal/hidden structure develops. Both the formal and the informal structures determine the nature and patterns of interaction that develop (Heiss, 1981; Hammersley, 1984; van Lier, 1988).

From the above it follows that classroom processes are influenced by the participants' behaviour and attitudes towards each other, their immediate environment, as well as their learning experiences, all of which play a role in promoting or inhibiting the transmission and acquisition of knowledge.

Classroom interaction is of particular importance in this study precisely because it is the centre stage where the teaching/learning process is managed, where learning opportunities are created and exploited (Allwright, 1991). As van Lier (1988: 91) argues, *"if we want to find out how and why learning does or does not take place in specific classroom settings we need information from a variety of sources, one of them being classroom interaction"*. As such, it is a crucial component that will enable us to detect, *at a practical level*, to what extent English language teaching is satisfactory or unsatisfactory and may lead us toward an explanation of why this is so.

My working definition of the term 'classroom interaction' is that it is a joint verbal and non-verbal activity involving two or more participants who endeavour to communicate meaningful messages in the process of language teaching and learning; in doing so, they influence each other's reactions/output and contribute (positively or negatively) to the management of learning. The specific research questions which correspond to the given definition and which are central to the collection and analysis of data from the sample of classrooms are as follows:

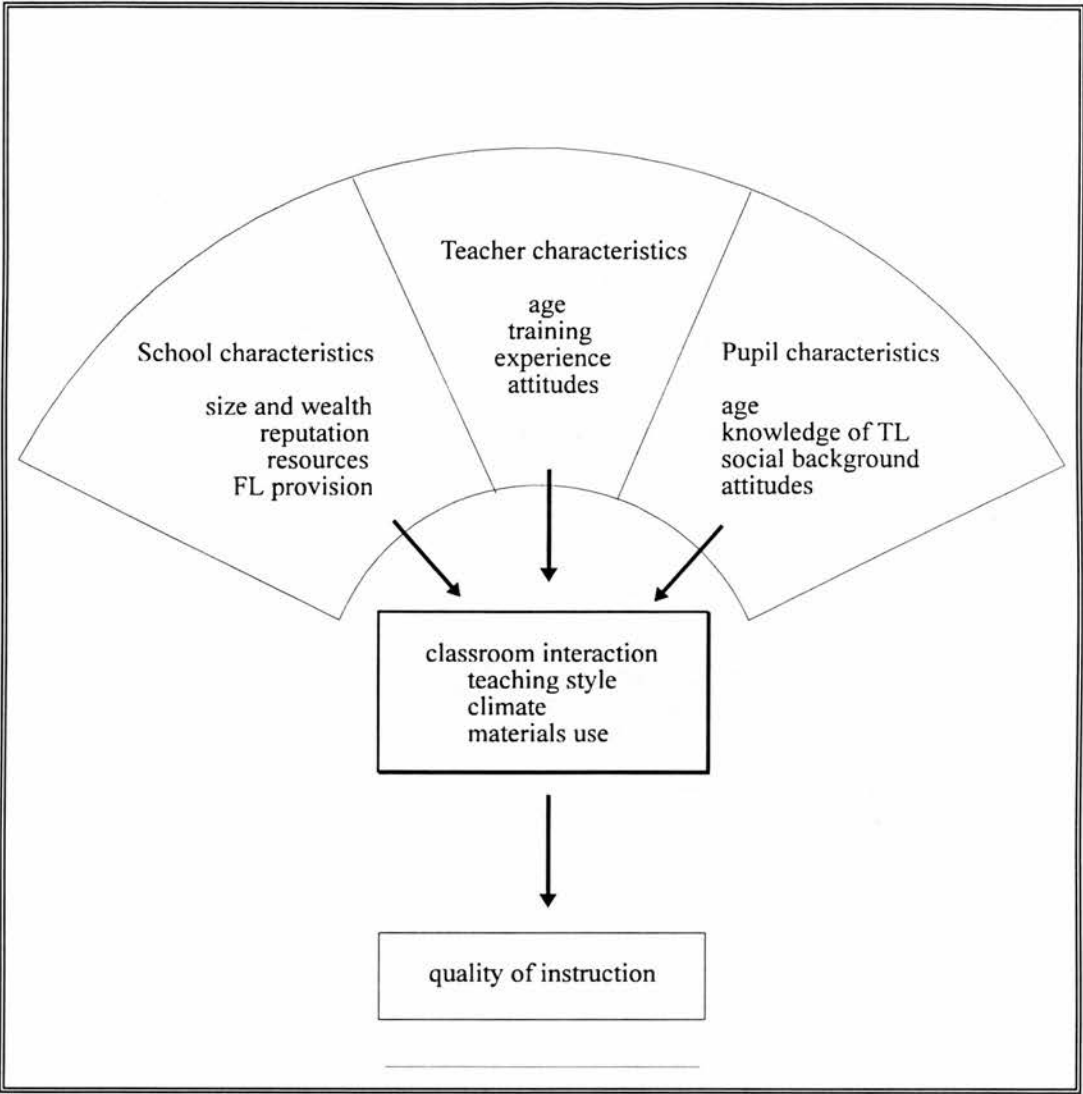
4. What is the social atmosphere or the classroom climate like, as a result of the ensuing interaction/the developments in the classroom?
5. What style of teaching is reflected in the classroom practice? Is it formal, informal, autocratic, democratic, or a combination? What is the relationship between teacher and pupils?
6. What is the dominant pattern of classroom interaction within each lesson observed? When and why do these interaction patterns occur (i.e. what purpose do they serve)?
7. To what extent is the interaction predominantly:
  - a) language focused, i.e. adhering to structured language instruction?
  - b) meaning focused, i.e. having a real communicative intent?
  - c) focused on classroom management?
  - d) focused on miscellaneous events other than the lesson procedure itself?
8. Does the observable verbal interaction fall into the categories of interaction types as exemplified by van Lier (1988: 155-156)? Is emphasis placed more on activity- or topic-focused exchanges during the course of the language lesson, i.e. are the participants primarily focusing on how things are done and in what way they are being said, or rather on what is being talked about?
9. What is the nature of the classroom activities taking place?
10. How and to what extent do pupils participate in classroom interaction?
  - (a) Verbally: do they take initiative and offer contributions or ask questions, or do they only respond to teacher elicitation?
  - (b) Nonverbally: do they raise hands, attempt to establish eye contact with the teacher, nod, etc.?



11. In what language do teachers and pupils make their verbal contributions? What is the quality of these contributions?
12. What materials are used in the course of the lessons? What type are they (audio and/or visual; supplementary material or special EFL materials) and to what extent does their use dominate in the lesson?

By serving as different avenues of enquiry into the nature of classroom interaction, the above questions cover both its social and verbal dimensions, i.e. what is done as well as what is said. Subsequently, these questions provide insights into the shaping of the lessons and the quality of teacher and pupil contributions. The basic components of the study are depicted in the model below:

Figure 6: Presage and process variables as evaluation foci



Product variables, i.e. the monitoring of pupil outcomes via the setting of tests and the examination of their results, are excluded from this inquiry (Alderson, 1992; Rea-Dickins & Lwaitama, 1995). The data collection procedure for this study did not involve testing because the issue of investigating the various factors relating to the *process* of teaching was considered more central and meaningful to this evaluation than checking language performance through externally imposed tests. The essential question here is not whether the end result is favourable or not in terms of the teaching and learning achieved but what the nature of classroom interaction is like and why the FL program operates the way it does.

Permission was requested to see the school reports of the classes that I observed, in which the individual pupils' grades on all taught subjects were entered from year to year. However, as it turned out, it was not always possible to get hold of the reports as they were regarded as private property with limited accessibility. Upon enquiring, I was told that statistical records of pupil progress and achievement in English were not kept. Measures of pupil performance in Greek state schools were not available, as no such formal data has been accumulated by the authorities to date (Taglides, A., personal communication; Appendix A). Moreover, the grades were very often not representative of the pupils' actual knowledge of English and as such could not be considered very reliable.

#### **5.4 A working definition of 'success'**

A primary task in educational policy is to ensure that a range of desirable learning experiences in the schools are so planned and executed as to contribute to successful and appropriate learning for all pupils. Yet, there is room for considerable debate as to what is 'desirable' and 'successful' and who says so. In the words of Dockrell and Hamilton (1980: 75), the evaluator's task is:

"to make a comprehensive statement of what the program is observed to be, with useful references to the satisfaction and dissatisfaction that appropriately selected people feel toward it."

Value terms such as "successful/unsuccessful", "satisfactory/unsatisfactory", etc. can take on very different meanings according to their frame of reference. Therefore it is important to clarify what is understood by "satisfactory" foreign language teaching in the context of this study. In line with my own and the majority of the stakeholders' understanding of what this term means, the following working definition is proposed:

In terms of the teaching and learning experience as a whole, successful or satisfactory FL teaching is where positive attitudes and enthusiasm are engendered in both teacher and pupils; where the subject matter is interesting and varied, and where pupils participate actively in the lesson and display flexibility in their use of the language at their current level of competence.

Unsatisfactory conditions of FL instruction would therefore give rise to evidence of the opposite. For example, participants may express lack of interest and discontent with the way the lesson procedure is carried out, or have low expectations of their language lessons.

#### **5.4.1 Criteria for determining success in a language lesson**

The criteria that will be used to determine the relative satisfactoriness of the ELT program in Greek secondary schools are the following:

1) **expert standards of quality** (i.e. the extent to which classroom practice conforms to the principles of 'good' language instruction in accordance with the assumptions and theories of overseas experts).

It is often pointed out that there is no 'best' way of teaching, as teaching necessitates a modification of means and methods to the particular traits, demands and needs of a class (Castain, in Allen & Campbell, 1972, Wilkins, 1974, Ellis, 1990). Nonetheless, teaching practice is driven by the notion of the *"learning group ideal"* (Holliday, 1994: 54) and is frequently discussed in relation to a set of variables that are believed to contribute optimally to FL learning. Among the essential parameters of a theoretically 'good' lesson we may find the following:

- the setting of clear teaching objectives
- consistent or extensive use of the target language
- a variety of interaction patterns
- the incorporation of a variety of activities in the lesson
- opportunities for involvement
- a positive classroom climate

No doubt, having clear teaching objectives and a clear lesson plan is advantageous for all participants. It is important to establish a clear understanding of what will be done so that classroom activities can succeed one another briskly. Clarifying the plan of action and presenting the language items that will be required before actually

practising them helps considerably towards smooth co-operation in the classroom (Malamah-Thomas, 1987; Ur, 1988; Wringe, 1994).

Effective teaching and learning also means using the target language as a speech as far as possible. Chaudron (1988: 121) points out that:

"in the typical foreign language classroom the common belief is that the fullest competence in the TL is achieved by means of the teacher providing a rich TL environment, in which not only instruction and drill are executed in the TL, but also disciplinary and management operations".

Similarly, according to Wringe (1994:12), it makes a difference which of the two languages comes into play in the lesson procedure, since *"every time a teacher or a pupil makes a request or gives a reply, expresses a reaction ... or simply thinks aloud in the mother tongue, an opportunity is missed for the pupils to hear speak, read or write the target language"*. A basic requirement then, is to use the target language for real communication as well as formal language instruction while taking the pupils' needs and level of competence into consideration (Wringe, 1994).

Further, it is maintained that effective language learning is manifested through active pupil participation and opportunities for involvement (van Lier, 1988; Parkinson, 1992). This means that for the learners the benefit lies in manipulating and exploring the language for themselves. Towards achievement of this goal, it is helpful to allow for a variety of interaction patterns in the classroom which make more independent modes of working possible, thereby facilitating negotiation of meaning and comprehension of language forms and their use (Pica, 1989; Allwright & Bailey, 1991; van Lier, 1988). Pair-work, group-work or collaborative activities are particularly helpful in giving learners a feeling of responsibility for their own learning.

Yet another characteristic of good practice is the incorporation of a variety of activities in the lesson which relate to the learners' experience and their capabilities. It is important to introduce activities that sustain pupil interest, stimulate their imagination and encourage individuals to take initiative.

It is just as important to create a classroom climate that contributes positively to the learning experience (Pierce, 1994; Cabello & Terrell, 1994). This includes establishing mutually acceptable rules of conduct, maintaining open channels of communication, establishing a friendly atmosphere, showing sensitivity, care and respect towards the pupils, and providing them with constant feedback about their performance. Infiltrating a positive attitude in the classroom can increase motivation and can enhance the pupils' self-confidence and sense of achievement, which will go a long way to helping both teachers and pupils reach their eventual aims (Papakonstantinou, 1988).

Other criteria which will be used to steer this evaluation are as follows:

- 2) **curriculum objectives** (i.e. the extent to which the objectives of the English course for the 3rd grade of gymnasium are fulfilled, as described in the curriculum directives of the educational authorities).
- 3) **local standards of appropriacy** (i.e. the degree of appropriateness of the ELT methodology employed in relation to local institutional norms).
- 4) **affective factors** (i.e. the degree of interest and the feelings of those directly involved in English language education, primarily teachers and pupils).

The above criteria have been deliberately selected to judge the Greek state secondary ELT program not only by 'external' standards -as specified by criteria (i) and (ii)- but also to probe into the 'internal' local forces which may affect language teaching and learning - as set by criteria (iii) and (iv). This choice of criteria accords best with the nature and purpose of the study.

### **5.5 The nature of the evaluation**

Because it focuses on the current, ongoing process of language instruction, this study constitutes a *formative* evaluation. By looking at the actual practice of language teaching, as well as the various angles from which the participants see it, this evaluation attempts a *bottom-up* approach to the ELT situation. Moreover it contains features of *relativistic* research (Scriven, in Dockrell & Hamilton, 1980), since the



perspectives of the stakeholders are accepted and recounted as credible multiple truths that help to create a fuller picture of classroom reality. The motif '*issues and concerns*' (of teachers and pupils) acts as its pivotal organiser, since the stimulus for this investigation has been the concern of the stakeholders about the quality of English language instruction in the Greek state schools. Finally, this evaluation is *responsive* to those involved in and around the language program (chiefly pupils and teachers), because it takes account of their views and observations and aims to make the findings useful to them (Stake, 1980).

### **The audience of the evaluation report**

The overt purpose of this study is to submit it as a PhD thesis. Thus, first and foremost, this study addresses an audience of academics and experts in the field of educational and program evaluation, who will judge the quality of the work done. The researcher was not appointed by a government body neither was she commissioned by sponsors to conduct this evaluation. There has been no direct or indirect intervention from external parties in any of the stages of the research.

### **5.6 Choice of subjects and rationale**

Two samples of classroom data were collected from the third and final grade of the lower secondary schools (gymnasium) in Greece and the eighth grade of secondary school in Germany, where English is taught as a foreign language.

I chose to observe classes in the lower secondary level because it is at this level that English was introduced in the school curriculum (until the recent 1992-93 reforms - see Chapter Four, §4.3.2), and where it is believed that the problems with ELT are rooted. Further, I took into consideration that by the end of the third grade Greek pupils have come to the end of a three year-cycle of English instruction in school, during which they should have accumulated a basic knowledge of the language and are expected to be able to fulfil their communication needs through this knowledge (see §4.3.3). Another reason for my decision to work with classes of 3rd-graders is that as young adolescents they are aware of their needs and expectations concerning

FL learning, they are more sensitive to classroom processes and can articulate their views about what goes on in the classroom more accurately than the younger secondary school-fellows.

The decision to examine the teaching of English in the German context was taken during the preliminary analysis of the Greek data, which, at the time, included a sample of lessons from three private language schools. Shortly after the first four lessons from both the Greek state and private sectors had been transcribed, described and analysed holistically, it became evident that these two sectors contrast to such an extent in terms of their resources and organisation, that a comparison of the two would simply emphasise obvious differences. Specifically, the main distinguishing features of the private institutes are that a) as private organisations they invest in high financial capital, b) they focus on gaining prestige in a very competitive market by advertising, investing in modern resources, c) they charge fees and have the capacity to grant internationally acknowledged certification of studies, and d) their internal organisation and management is different, for example, staffing includes qualified native speakers of the modern languages who direct courses and teach in all levels, classes are organised into small groups, etc.

Hence, the sampling procedure needed to be adjusted and the possibility of including a new set of data from another context was explored. I was prompted to look for similarities and differences in terms of what takes place in the classroom, what language support is provided and what the participants' views about their language learning experiences are across compatible sets of classroom data where, however, in the one context there would be no widespread claim of unsatisfactory language instruction, i.e. no negative verdict. As in the case of EFL in German schools. Moreover, in the Greek/German composition, the basic research variables of target language, class size, age-group of subjects and category of school (i.e. state) between the two settings were similar, and the complete set of data has enabled me to make a *descriptive comparison* (Raivola, 1986: 262) of the language classrooms in these two contexts, thus creating a broader framework in which various observations could be related to the research questions.

### **5.7 The sample and setting of the study**

The field work in Greece took place between March and May 1994. The data from the German schools was collected in two short periods, namely, February - March and May - June 1995. This was a particularly good time for the observations, since the members of each class were already familiar with (both hidden and explicit) norms and rules of behaviour and, through their classroom conduct, could reveal much about how classroom events and interaction patterns typically develop.

The main field work took place in Athens, Patra and Berlin. Familiarity, convenience and timing played a crucial part in the construction of this sample of data. Having lived in Athens and Patra and being acquainted with teachers and administrators who live in the area, I considered that it would be easier to establish collaboration with the schools there through personal contacts. Berlin was also familiar to me through past visits.

Steps towards obtaining formal permission from the Greek Pedagogical Institute were taken three months in advance, and although I was eventually provided with no less than four separately stamped and approved documents, the paper-work was delayed by a couple of weeks subsequent to my arrival in Athens. Concerned by the loss of time and the upcoming summer holidays, I sought the assistance of Diamantidou, the school adviser for East Attika and the Aegean islands. We made arrangements over the phone for me to begin my observations the very next day at a secondary school which was within the school adviser's jurisdiction. In Patra, the school principals that I approached sanctioned my presence and allowed me to establish collaboration with their staff. In the end, six classes were observed from three different schools.

The schools in Berlin were approached differently. The first teacher to take part in the study (Teacher H) was introduced to me by a former pupil of hers with whom I was acquainted. A colleague at the same school (Teacher G) who heard about my work offered to let me observe his classes as well. Subsequent to these two incidents

through which the data collection began, I was unable to establish other personal contacts, so I resorted to randomly choosing schools from the phone-book and calling to ask for permission to visit the school. With the help of a native speaker of German who acted on my behalf<sup>47</sup>, the purpose of the study was explained and negotiations were begun for a meeting with the head and/or the English teachers. Again, sampling decisions were made on the basis of practicality and convenience: I obtained classroom data from those schools which were located within a reasonable travelling distance and whose teachers agreed to participate in my study. Five different English language classes were observed, in three different types of schools: a *Gymnasium*, a *Realschule* and a *Haupt/Realschule* (see §4.5.2). The exact data collection procedures were followed as with the Greek sample, with the exception of the interviews where a native speaker was called in to ask the teachers and pupils questions on my behalf.

Due to time constraints related to the completion of the fieldwork and the conviction that even a single lesson can yield a wealth of information (van Lier, 1988), two lessons from each class were observed and recorded. The first lesson served as a 'trial run' where, primarily, the intention was to make myself known to the class and to minimise my 'foreignness' as much as possible. The second of each pair of lessons was transcribed and analysed. This amounted to a total of 22 recorded lessons (excluding the pilot study and the data collected from Greek private language institutes (*frontistiria*)), out of which 11 were actually used as part of the evaluation (see table below for a list of the participant schools).

**Table 5: List of participant schools**

School	Class/ Lesson	No. of lessons observed	No. of lessons transcribed
1. Athens	A	2	1
	B	2	1
2. Patra	C	2	1
	D	2	1
3. Patra	E	2	1
	F	2	1
4. ( <i>Gymnasium</i> ), Berlin	G	2	1
	H	2	1
5. ( <i>Realschule</i> ), Berlin	I	2	1
	J	2	1
6. ( <i>Haupt-Realschule</i> ), Berlin	K	2	1
	Total:	22	11

While the above lessons amount to a small set of data, they are believed to be representative of the kind of foreign language teaching and learning that goes on in Greek and German public schools, since the research involved an investigation of ordinary, non-exceptional school settings and recorded a kind of teaching that the majority of pupils are exposed to.

### **5.8 Data collection methods**

In line with the guidelines on ethnographic research, the basic tools employed for this study were: a) non-participant observation of classes including the taking of field notes and audio recording of the lessons, b) introspection data, i.e. interviews which probed into the attitudes and perspectives of the participants, and c) supplementary documentation on the ELT curriculum, teaching materials and test samples. A more detailed description of the data collection methods which were employed follows below.



### 5.8.1 Classroom observation

I studied the teaching process and the behaviours of pupils and teachers as a non-participant observer. The focus of my observations included: the classroom setting, the seating arrangements, the materials used, participant organisation, i.e. "who says what to whom and how", and classroom activities.

Upon entering a classroom for the first time, I was usually given the opportunity by the teachers to introduce myself to the class. This introduction took the form of a very short speech which went more or less along the following lines:

*"I am a student from Edinburgh University and I am here to stay with you for a short time because I am interested in finding out how the English lesson takes place. I would like to watch a couple of your lessons in order to improve my own work. Later on I would like to talk with some of you about your lesson. I hope this is alright with you."*

I waited for a sign of acceptance before proceeding to find a place to sit. In all cases, the pupils were given the chance to make any objections known if they felt uncomfortable with my presence in their classroom.

During the observations I was seated either at the back or at the side of the classroom with the audio equipment and my observation sheets at hand. At the start of the lesson, I used the observation sheet to note down specific details such as the date, the name of the school, the name of the class, the number of pupils in the class, the starting time and the duration of the lesson. Further down the page, I drew a sketch of the seating arrangements, and filled in information on the materials used. The rest of the A4 sheet was left blank for taking notes on the lesson itself (see Appendix B for a replica).

Once the lesson was under way, I proceeded to write down the activities that were carried out in as much detail as possible, noting especially whether various patterns of interaction were taking shape and who initiated them, what was written on the



black-board, and as much of the non-verbal interaction as I could capture from where I was sitting, e.g. 'teacher switches on OHP, directs pupils' attention to it'.

### **5.8.2 Audio recording**

To accumulate a record of the jointly constructed verbal behaviour of teachers and pupils, a recording device was brought into the classroom on every observation. For the observations in the Greek schools I used a high quality conference microphone which would lie flat on any surface and transform that surface into a sound-reception field. Its small, flattened form was advantageous in that it was easy to overlook, and if noticed, it was easy to lose sight of after a while. The German data was collected with the use of a long, cylindrical microphone which, due to its shape, was difficult to place somewhere where it could optimally record but remain unnoticed. The most suitable solution was to position the microphone upright inside my bag while keeping the microphone head exposed.

Knowing that the presence of a tape recorder can be inhibiting or even detrimental in distorting the reality of the classroom, I consciously tried to make its appearance as inconspicuous as possible. I kept the recorder out of sight and, depending on how clear the acoustics were, I would either put the microphone on the desk or keep it partly hidden in my bag.

The audio recordings were effective in providing a fairly large, accurate and permanent set of data. As will be shown, a close study of the transcripts helped monitor what events affected the classroom climate, the extent to which teaching during the English lesson focused on meaning or form, what language was used more frequently by teacher and pupils and for what purposes, etc. The individual recordings covered the whole lesson from the moment the teacher addressed the class up to the end of the lesson which was signalled by the sound of the school bell. The recordings amounted to an average of 45 minutes of class time for each lesson taped.

### 5.8.3 Field notes

The field notes served as a supplement to the audio recordings and proved to be a valuable memory aid; they helped me relate specific incidents to the recorded data and to build up a more complete picture of the classroom context under investigation. Aside from taking notes on the teachers, the classroom, the events and activities that took shape during the course of the lesson, the climate, etc. I also wrote down general impressions of the schools, the available resources, interesting quotations, etc., before and after the lesson observations.

### 5.8.4 Interviewing

The purpose of conducting interviews was to obtain research-relevant information directly from the participants (Cohen & Manion, 1985). It was considered that the interviews could corroborate the classroom findings and could provide important information that would highlight the complexities of the teaching process. Additionally, the interviews were used to obtain biographical data about the participants of the study.

The list of questions that was drawn up for the interviews consisted of structured questions starting from the broad and leading to the specific (following the 'funnel' model as proposed by Cohen & Manion (1985)). The interviews were "*focused*" (Weir & Roberts, 1994: 145-6) in the sense that although the questions were formulated in advance and followed a specific order, their wording (and sometimes their sequence) was open to manipulation, depending on the informant's knowledge and understanding.

A variety of question types was posed to the informants: some questions focused on their beliefs/attitudes concerning the language they were being taught, i.e. "*what do you think about the English language?*" "*what do you think about learning English in school?*". Other questions sought to evoke the participants' feelings about the lesson procedure, e.g. "*what did you enjoy most/least about the lesson and why?*". There were knowledge questions "*how often do you write tests or exams?*", "*what do you*

*expect to learn from your English lessons?"* and a number of questions related to their experience/behaviour which yielded descriptions of what the informants think they actually do in class, e.g. *"how did you participate in the lesson? Do you volunteer to ask questions?"*. The final section of the interview schedule was designed to match a set of context questions relating to the informants' background (Weir & Roberts, 1994: 147) (see Appendix D).

During the interview, I sometimes included side-questions if something unexpected or newly relevant came up in what was said or appeared to relate to what I had observed during the lesson. For example, in order to probe further into the pupils' attitudes about the English lesson I asked the interviewees whether there was a particular term or expression that they use amongst themselves, in their school jargon, to refer to the English lesson. It should be stressed though that the interviewees were not pressed in any way to answer the questions and probing cues were used where the response was not entirely clear. Before moving on to a new question I also occasionally rephrased what the interviewee had just said so as to confirm that I had understood him/her correctly. All the responses were transcribed, grouped together according to their respective questions and examined qualitatively for common views, converging attitudes and salient or interesting points.

### **Teacher interviews**

The arguments put forward in order to invite the teachers to an interview after the classroom observations were that it is always advantageous to obtain first-hand information from someone who knows their context well, and that teachers are well-qualified to offer interpretations of various classroom phenomena, and highlight the workings of the classroom culture (Rea-Dickins & Germaine, 1992). All teachers agreed to be interviewed; in fact, some were looking forward to the opportunity of voicing their opinions about various aspects of the classroom situation (e.g. teachers B, E, H).

The six Greek teachers who took part in the study were interviewed in their native language, while the five German teachers were interviewed in English. The choice of language for communication during the interviews was made on the basis of ease and practicality; Greek was easier and more convenient to use with the former group, while English was the most effective communications link between myself and the German teachers due to the fact that my spoken German was less than fluent at the time of the study.

It was planned to carry out each interview at a time closest to the final observation when the teacher would be free. Part of our talk would cover aspects of the last lesson that was observed, because it was important that the teachers could recall the lesson as a whole and aspects of their teaching as clearly as possible. This proved quite difficult to arrange, as the teachers often had a full teaching program and were not always available until two or three days later. To accommodate my request however, some teachers (B and H) suggested we go to a café after school and have our talk there, which we did. Others, like teachers A and C, sat with me in a corner of the staff room during a 'free' hour, and carried out the interview in the presence of other teachers. This made it rather difficult to preserve the confidentiality of our talk. On other occasions there were other difficulties: even when granted access to a small room where the interview could be carried out with no apparent disturbance, the noise coming from outside was so loud and penetrating that we had to strain to hear what we were saying to each other (as with teachers E and F).

At the start of the interview I placed the microphone, two pens, and the sheets with the questions and the background information on the table before me. Each teacher was informed about the purpose of the interview, where it was made clear that it was not in any way intended to assess their performance at a personal level, but rather to simply obtain their views and opinions about various aspects of the English lesson. They were informed that the talk would be recorded on tape and were assured of the confidential and anonymous nature of the interviews. Finally, they were encouraged to feel free in expressing their thoughts and opinions. The interviews lasted between 20 to 45 minutes depending on the length of the teachers' replies.

## Pupil interviews

In addition, interviews were conducted with small groups of pupils from the observed classes, in each case making up 25% of the population of their class. They were interviewed in pairs of 'one boy - one girl' (where possible) and selected according to their overall performance in the English lesson as viewed by their teacher, which was determined as being *"very good"*, *"good"*, *"average"* and *"weak"*. This method of selection was employed in order to capture a representative set of opinions and perspectives from pupils of different levels. In their majority the pupils were quite excited with the idea of being interviewed and responded well. In all, a total of 84 pupils were interviewed.

With permission granted by the principal and the teachers involved, the interviews with the pupils took place directly after the second observation session. The pupils were called out of their next lesson in pairs and were sent back to class at the end of the interview. This turned out to be a suitable arrangement, as only two were kept engaged at a time and would only miss part of the lesson.

A native-speaker of German was entrusted to conduct the interviews with the German pupils, as it was believed that they would feel more comfortable in expressing themselves in their own language. Having been given precise instructions as how to behave, she addressed the pupils in an informal, friendly style, and, at my request, asked probing questions where there was scope for more information. I took up a less active role, but nevertheless monitored the interview process attentively. When in doubt, I requested that the pupils explain, elaborate or clarify something they said in order to help me understand their points better.

A first concern was to try and dispel any nervousness the pupils might feel. They were assured that they were not being 'tested' on anything, but that they would be asked to give their personal views and opinions about their English lesson. I mentioned that our talk would be taped and that any objections to this would be respected. Further, I stressed that our dialogue would be strictly confidential, that

every informant would remain anonymous and invited them to express themselves freely and honestly. We sat fairly close around a table. On the table in front of us there would be a piece of paper from which the statement of the nature and purpose of the interview was read in clear, simple language. Also, there lay a copy of the interview schedule, copies of the 'general biographical information' table which the interviewees were asked to fill in, and some coloured pens. The interviews took place in the staff room, in an empty classroom, in the library. It was not always possible to find a quiet place to conduct the interview, neither was it possible to control external noise, so sometimes there were distractions in the course of our talk. The duration of the interviews lasted approximately 20-30 minutes. At the end, the pupils were thanked for their co-operation.

The lists of questions that were posed to the teachers and pupils during the interviews as well as a selection of translated, edited and abridged<sup>48</sup> interviews from which quotations were extracted are presented in Appendix C and D.

### **5.8.5 Documentary evidence**

It was necessary to consult printed matter presenting the official pre-set pedagogical objectives, as they would inform the researcher of the rationale and the aims of the school FL policy as drawn up by the central administration. Also, up-to-date exemplars of the assessment procedures were seen as useful evidence of the practical outcomes of the ongoing classroom activity.

The documentary evidence assembled by the end of the field trip included:

a) current circulars relating to the teaching of foreign languages in the secondary schools, b) official guidelines for the setting of tests/exams, c) individual samples of the most recent test/examination papers from each class (kept as records of achievement). To obtain this information, I consulted the archives in the Department of Foreign Languages at the Ministry of National Religion and Education, the National Research Institute in Athens, and contacted the local School Advisers' Bureau and the administrative and teaching staff of the schools. Documentation on



the Berlin schools was obtained from the Institute for Teacher Training and School Development and the Education Authorities in Berlin.

## **5.9 Treatment of the observation data**

### **5.9.1 Transcription**

Upon my return to Edinburgh I set about transcribing the classroom data. I opted for the CHILDES system (MacWhinney, 1991), which was originally developed for the transcription and manipulation of child language data, but designed in such a way as to be widely applicable to research in other areas. The CHILDES manual offered precise guidelines that would create a neat, consistent, orderly and readable transcription. A set of sample transcripts included in the manual were initially very helpful in giving me a clear idea of how the transcription system is used.

Two specific tools from this system, CHAT<sup>49</sup> and CHECK, were used extensively. By means of a set of basic coding conventions that were selected from a large corpus of options in CHAT, I produced computerised transcripts of my recorded lessons and then ran CHECK to verify the syntactic accuracy of the transcript. For the coding of the transcriptions, in addition to consulting the CHAT system, I used a program named ANALYSE which was created for me for the purposes of my study (Drews, 1994). This program enabled me to scan the file, identify significant features in the transcripts, mark them and automate the quantitative analysis of the complete text.

#### **The transcription format**

At the beginning of each transcript there is a section with nine markers, each of which supplies specific information on the lesson under consideration. *'Participants'* lists the identified and unidentified actors in a file; *'Location'* shows the geographical location of the interaction; *'Date'* records the date of the recording; *'Time Duration'* gives the beginning and end times of the lesson; *'Comment'* provides general comments on the environment of the classroom, the seating arrangements, etc.; *'Situation'* identifies the general context of the interaction.

Once transcribed, each lesson appears as a script, divided into two columns by an imaginary margin running down the length of the page. The first column, on the left, is made up of codes and symbols used to identify three basic components: a) the speakers (in three-letter codes, e.g. \*JAN), b) the embedded translations to the lines spoken in the native language (%eng), and c) explanations on pronunciation errors made by the speakers (%err). All codes and symbols are followed by a colon and a tab space. The second column on the right, presents the classroom discourse in written form, embedded with transcription conventions that help approximate the written text to the actual spoken discourse. A summary of the transcription conventions used -as proposed in CHAT- is provided below:

**Table 6: Transcription conventions.**

Symbol	Example	Explanation/function
ELE	*T-A: you disagree ELE?	capitals are used for proper names, they do not indicate beginnings of sentences.
.	okay.	a period indicates final falling intonation (utterance terminator).
?	what was that?	a question mark (utterance terminator).
!	not you!	an exclamation mark (utterance terminator).
,	both letters, both letters	a comma indicates low-rising intonation, suggesting continuation.
+	I've seen picture of+ pictures of it.	a plus sign indicates a break-off followed by repair or rephrasing.
+...	*T-G: it+...	trailing off.
+/.	ena gramma+/.	+/- indicates an abrupt break in the utterance, such as that made by an interruption.
[% ]	[%claps hands for attention]	square brackets with an embedded percentage symbol contains comments relevant to the immediate interaction.
[!]	the article's[!] opinion	an exclamation mark embedded between square brackets at the end of a word indicates that that word was emphasised through pitch or amplitude.
#	the name is in the # question.	pause; one # approximates one second, two ## approximate two seconds. three ### approximate three seconds.
["]	*AIS: ehm, ["]perhaps	quoting of a single word.
["] ["]	you just start ## ["] mister Hutchinson thinks that ["].	quoting of a stretch of speech longer than one word.
xxx	*LLL: xxx.	three xs indicate unintelligible speech.
www	*T-J: www	this symbol is used to indicate discourse that is superfluous and is left out of the transcription.
[*]	all coloureds [*] %err: coloureds /kʌlʌrɪds/ = coloured /kʌlɪdɪz/ ;	indicates an error in pronunciation, followed by an error coding that supplies the correct pronunciation enclosed in slashes.

Although efforts were made to extract as much detail as possible from the audio recordings, the individual transcriptions are to a certain degree inexact. This stands as a reinforcement to the remark that *"...a transcript ... will never contain a fully accurate record of what went on in an interaction"* (MacWhinney, 1991: 3). Much of the non-verbal information could not be reproduced and it was often difficult to determine at certain stages in the interaction whether participants initiated an exchange or bid voluntarily for a turn, unless it was explicitly indicated in the field notes. Subsequent to the transcription and coding, the findings from the transcripts were correlated and supplemented with the information from the interview data.

### **5.9.2 Translation**

It was a common occurrence in all the lessons -albeit in varying degrees-, to come across stretches of speech where the native language was used by one or both of the interactants to communicate. The way of dealing with this in the transcriptions was to provide the original words of the speaker and then include the translation in English immediately below. However, when using parts of transcriptions as examples in the thesis, the translation is given on the right hand side of the citation, so as not to interrupt its original sequence. In translating the speakers' utterances, it was felt best to maintain a half-way point between a direct and a free interpretation of what was said. That is to say, the translations adhere close to the speaker's intended meanings but without literally rendering every word that is spoken.

### **5.10 Data analysis**

Ethnographic analysis involves *"the systematic examination of something to determine its parts, the relationship among parts and their relationship to the whole"* (Spradley, 1979: 92). More concretely, in the analysis of the accumulated data from the Greek and German FL classrooms, I concentrated on identifying discrete phenomena and patterns of behaviour that would reveal their function and contribution to the teaching process, tracing the underlying values and attitudes embedded in the interaction and juxtaposing the findings from the two settings in

order to yield plausible explanations concerning the ELT situation in Greek secondary schools.

Following the transcription of the audio data, the foremost task was to break each transcript down into segments or stretches of 'naturalistic' units for a closer analysis. This unit of analysis was borrowed from Mitchell *et al.* (1981), who define it as "*a stretch of discourse having a particular topic and involving the participants in a distinctive configuration of roles, linguistic and organisational*".

The next task was to inspect the sequence of exchanges within each segment and begin a selective process in order to identify patterns of information that fit into specific categories or adhered to a particular theme which could be related back to the 'process' questions. These were coded either in terms of the salient patterns that emerged or with the aid of an existing coding system i.e. by matching selected segments against pre-existing categories (after Long, 1980). In the initial stages of categorising the data I adopted parts of the COLT (Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching) coding system<sup>50</sup>.

COLT is divided into two parts in which the first part describes classroom activity, the subject matter of the activities, participant organisation, and use of materials (see Appendix E). The second part covers communicative categories, including "*giving predictable or unpredictable information*", "*requesting pseudo or genuine information*", "*restricted/ limited/ unrestricted linguistic form*", etc. I considered these categories especially relevant to my analysis and suitable for adaptation because they could aptly reflect typical features of communication in classroom interaction and various aspects of participation that I sought to highlight, and could be used to code both teacher and pupil activities.

Since this project was based on an ethnographic framework of research, the data analysis was done qualitatively. However, aspects of classroom talk, such as the frequency of talk in the target language, teacher questions, control techniques, etc.,

were subjected to a subsequent quantification, for the purpose of complementing the qualitative analysis of the lessons.

### **5.11 Problems in data collection and analysis**

Two main problems encountered were: getting into the classrooms and collecting as naturalistic data as possible.

#### **Permission**

Access was one practical problem that I deliberately tried to avoid facing early on in the research. I took preliminary steps in seeking official permission from the Greek authorities in writing, and I wrote separately to one of the school advisers based in Athens, requesting her assistance in dealing with any bureaucratic difficulties that could arise, which was readily promised me. However, when I arrived in Athens, the necessary papers had not yet been compiled and I spent the first two weeks deliberating with civil servants in order to speed things up. Without the papers from the Pedagogical Institute, it turned out almost impossible to collaborate with schools where I had no contacts whatsoever. On one occasion, a school principal whom I approached at the start, after listening to the reasons for my visit and discovering that I did not yet have the official permission he asked for, gave me the phone number of an acquaintance of his working at the Ministry and made me understand that that was all he could do. I informed the school advisers Diamantidou and Tsinouka about the difficulties I was having. We discussed the requirements that the classrooms should conform to and then I was advised on which schools I could visit. Thereafter, a mention of their names was enough for the heads and teachers to sanction my presence in their school.

None of the complications described above arose during the data collection in Germany, where I did not possess any official letter of permission. The co-operative stance of the teachers and principals could perhaps be attributed to the schools' general policy of encouraging research projects undertaken by graduate students.



## Reactivity

It is argued that the presence of a 'foreign' observer in a language classroom equipped with intrusive-looking recording apparatus, could threaten the participants or affect them to such a degree, that they may change or attempt to modify their behaviour (Seliger & Long, 1983). In such a situation pupils may present a false impression of their level of linguistic competence, thus making it less representative. This practical problem is known as reactivity or 'the observer's paradox' (Allwright & Bailey, 1991).

With that in mind, I expected some teachers to show resistance in having me in their classrooms or to harbour suspicions about my intentions, thinking perhaps that I might be critical of their teaching style. I was also aware of the possibility of some pupils behaving unnaturally in the classroom, e.g. making extreme efforts to comply with the teacher or falling into silence as a result of having an audience present.

In order to minimise the risk of distorting the reality of the classroom with my presence, I adopted a casual manner and consistently behaved as an interested and curious person who is there to watch but not to scrutinise every move and every detail of the lesson. In addition, I endeavoured to put teachers at ease by stressing that I was interested in how the lesson takes place in general and not on how they teach in particular. However, the fact that in some lessons the teachers actually mentioned my presence (teachers B, F, J) suggests that they had not dismissed me from their minds altogether, and were possibly acting more cautiously than usual.

The lack of time available for an extended stay at every school and the pressure involved in getting the data, worked against the prospect of becoming better acquainted with the teachers and pupils before entering their classrooms for the observations (Cherchalli, 1988) and establishing trust between myself and the informants. Rapport proved difficult to establish within the short span of time in which I was present at the schools. Despite maintaining a friendly demeanour and being open to conversation, I did not get much opportunity to come close to the participants, particularly the pupils. While sitting outside in the quadrangle or

strolling along the corridors I was greeted or stared at, but not drawn into conversation with them. On the whole, the time spent at each school was not sufficient to effectively dispel the 'outsider effect'.

### **5.12 Summary**

This chapter presented a detailed outline of the scope of the study, emphasising its orientation to the social context of the classroom and the nature of the interaction. It provided an explication of the research questions and the range of variables taken into consideration as the base for a process evaluation. It described the basic tools employed for the study and the implementation of the research plan. Finally, it presented a description of the treatment of the accumulated data and the method of analysis.

## **CHAPTER SIX: Presentation of the data: contextual and process variables**

The first part of this chapter concentrates on research questions 1, 2 and 3, which seek to establish how three sets of variables, i.e. the features of the school, the characteristics of the teachers, and the characteristics of the pupils, affect the process of English language teaching in schools. Descriptive information about each school, its location, its size, wealth, resources, the foreign language policy of the school, etc. is included as part of the profile of the data set. Information about the pupils includes: their socio-economic background, what age group they represent, where they are learning the TL, what their attitudes are about learning and language learning in particular, what their previous knowledge is, etc. (Bell, 1981). Likewise, essential information about the teachers includes their ethnic background, age and gender, their qualifications, the training they have undergone and their teaching experience, as well as their attitudes towards teaching English, all of which determines how their managerial and instructional roles have been moulded.

These external variables are taken into account because they permeate the classroom environment and play a supplementary role in influencing educational results. Thus, taking them into account allows for a more comprehensive assessment of FL education.

The second part of the chapter provides a detailed descriptive account of each of the lessons observed.

## 6.1 School characteristics

### 6.1.1 A description of the participant schools in Greece

**Table 7: Summary information on the Greek participant schools.**

**Greece**

	School #1	School #2	School #3
<b>Pupil population</b>	444	436	380
<b>Teacher-Pupil ratio</b>	1:28	1:29	1:31
<b>No. of FL teachers</b>	4	2	2
<b>FLs taught</b>	English, French	English	English
<b>Teachers of English</b>	3	2	2

#### **School #1, Athens.**

Printed information about the school was unavailable, so I relied on my own field notes and the accounts of the secretary and the principal of the school in order to compile the ensuing description.

The school operates in the mornings as a gymnasium only and is classified as an "average" school. The school population numbers 444 pupils, and has 31 members of staff with 3 teachers of English and one teacher of French. It is a three-storey building that was constructed in 1922, with a total of 16 classrooms and 3 administration offices, namely, a staff room, a principal's office and a secretary's office. The secretary's office also serves as a house office since the caretaker is also posted there. Additionally, there is a chemistry lab, a music room and a large room in the basement that is used for school celebrations.

At the time of the fieldwork the school's existence was under threat because the building was under private ownership and the property owner had sent an evacuation

order. A new school-building that was under construction was incomplete, moving to another location seemed impossible, and the principal appeared gravely concerned about this problem. Some of the staff at this school complained about the absence of a library and the lack of adequate office space which is quite obvious, particularly in the staff room where eleven desks are crammed together to form a square with an empty space in the middle. Because the desks are fewer than the number of teachers, they are used more like common storage places and coffee tables than individual work spaces. There is also a glass case filled with textbooks standing on one side and maps and geometry instruments propped up against the corners of the room. I was told that, initially, about one hundred books were collected to start the library, but the enthusiasm of the people involved waned before further progress could be made.

Regarding material resources, a recent acquisition has been the installation of 8 computers for the Information Technology subject. The school also owns two cassette recorders, a video machine, a slide projector and an OHP, which, with the exception of the cassette recorders, apparently come into use rather infrequently. A harmonium and a photocopier are kept in the principal's office and are used regularly.

For the past three years, 'experimental' English language teaching has taken place at the school. This means that, with the mediation of the school adviser, the school allows undergraduates from the University to do practice-teaching which sometimes involves applying 'new' classroom techniques. Also, the school invites teachers from the British Council to demonstrate their teaching to their long-serving colleagues.

### **School #2, Patra**

The second school I visited is located in a central region of the capital of the Peloponnese. Built in 1972, it is a large, rectangular building with classrooms at two levels, and operates as a lyceum in the mornings and a gymnasium in the afternoons. The 380 pupils who attend the gymnasium are taught by 24 teachers. Two teachers

are responsible for the teaching of English which is taught three times a week. A part-time teacher shares the teaching load with them.

This school has a reputation of being a reasonably "good" neighbourhood school but also has a bit of a turbulent history. As the principal of the school recalls, in 1991 the school was taken over by teachers and pupils in order to demonstrate their opposition to certain newly drafted 'conservative' decrees, which proposed (amongst other things) that pupils be watched and controlled in their out-of-school life and that examinations be re-introduced in the lower-secondary level. There was clash on the school grounds between the opponents and supporters of the decrees that resulted in the death of a Maths teacher. In 1992 the school building was once again taken over by teachers and pupils, to protest against the shortage of school buildings.

Sixteen classrooms are distributed over the two levels, while the staff room together with the principal's office, the secretary's office and the caretaker's office are situated separately at the ground level. The quadrangle, which covers an area roughly equivalent to two thirds of a residential block, is the common playground of the gymnasium, an adjoining lyceum and a primary school. In the middle of the building, what was formerly an open shed has been converted into a closed gym that also serves as a multi-purpose hall. Additionally, steps had recently been taken to convert the school's large basement into a library and a reading room. Some shelves had been put up and stacks of donated books lay unsorted in piles. Unfortunately, the setting up process was stalled due to an absence of volunteer organisers.

There is one photocopier in the principal's office and eight computers have been installed in one classroom. Other equipment is kept in a separate store room: one cassette recorder, maps, a harmonium, two anatomy models, a television, an OHP, and slides. With the exception of the harmonium, this equipment comes into use rather infrequently.



### School #3, Patra

This school, classified as an "average" neighbourhood school, is located on a busy street that leads to the centre of the city. It operates as a gymnasium, lyceum and night-school and is run jointly by a principal and a vice-principal. A total of 436 pupils are registered at this school and are taught by 33 teachers. In this school, the teaching of English is considered 'problematic' because of the pupils' lack of interest in the subject and the occurrence of frequent discipline problems in the course of the lessons.

It is a colourful three-storey building dating from 1956 with orange coloured gates and yellow doors. It has an L-shaped construction, with 11 classrooms and 2 staff rooms, one for the two day schools and one for the night school. Due to lack of space the secretary and the caretaker have their desks in the staff room, while the principals share the same office. At the ground level there is a small closed amphitheatre made of wood, in a very run-down state, which is used as a classroom. One of the classrooms which was originally a chemistry lab is partly destroyed and remains unused. There is also a large basement which is normally kept locked and serves as a store-room for administration files and gymnastics equipment. The cemented quadrangle accommodates a basketball court and a volley-ball court, a small canteen and three large recycling bins.

Pot plants with pink flowers in them hang from the railings of the first floor and a section of the staircase going up to the first level is decorated with children's paintings of flowers and butterflies. On one of the walls facing the quadrangle there is a large drawing of a white dove and the globe, with the word "*peace*" written across in Greek. Upon enquiring about the drawings because they are an unusual sight in state schools, I was informed that they were actually done because "*the other school didn't care so they didn't object*". Another detail that adds to the external appearance of the school, is that there is a public noticeboard on each level. On the corridor of the third floor there are posters promoting the protection of the

environment (e.g. "*I love and protect monuments*"), and others advertising career choices (e.g. joining the commercial navy).

The staff room itself is rather cramped but colourful. The walls are decorated with portrait drawings made by third graders of the school in 1992 and there are curtains hanging from the windows. A long wooden table with chairs around it stands in the middle and a couple of steel-framed writing tables are set at the far side of the room. Space has been made for a photocopier and in a corner lie two globes and a plastic model of the human torso. There is also a glass case with textbooks in it belonging to another school.

Aside from the photocopier that was mentioned above, other equipment that is available for use includes a cassette recorder and a harmonium, some rather dated physics equipment (e.g. an old telescope and scale) an OHP and eight computers. During an informal chat in the staff room with some of the members of staff, it emerged that the school lacks supplies of maps and other visual aids, chemical substances, and that a multiple-purpose hall with gymnastics equipment would be an absolute necessity.

### 6.1.2 A description of the participant schools in Germany

Table 8 : Summary information on the German participant schools

	School #4	School #5	School #6
<b>Pupil population</b>	650	430	384
<b>Teacher-Pupil ratio</b>	1:27	1:27	1:20
<b>No. of FL teachers</b>	11 plus 3 Latin teachers	12	15
<b>FLs taught</b>	English, French, Latin.	English, French	English, French, Turkish
<b>Teachers of English</b>	7	8	15

#### School #4, Berlin

Established in 1882, this school operates as a mixed secondary school with 55 permanent teaching staff and an in-take of over 600 pupils. It is considered a "good" school with a reputation in sports, particularly in rowing.

In order to approach the main building, one has to walk through a stone archway. The structure of the building is shaped like a Greek pi, as there are two wings extending from the right and left of the main building. There are two side entrances and two middle entrances. Inside the building, the wide corridors are painted pale yellow and the doors to the classrooms are numbered and painted in different colours. There are three levels of classrooms, isolated by heavy steel and glass doors at each landing. Going up a flight of stairs one sees a large, colourful painting on the wall of a boat floating on a bursting bottle. In the middle level there is a display window with samples of class projects.

The staff room is on the ground level and consists of two large rooms. In the first room one finds clusters of hexagonal desks, around which teachers sit to work or talk or read. In one section there is a kitchenette and a washbasin, and a small coffee area.

Teachers are allocated a coat cupboard, cubicles and individual pigeonholes. At various parts of the room there are bulletin boards containing newspaper articles, travel brochures, cultural events and administration charts. In the second room, the far side of the wall is covered with shelves of books (dictionaries, textbooks, supplementary material) and this is where three OHPs and the photocopier are kept. On one side, a row of desks joined together function as a work space. The staff room is connected to the principals' office and the secretary's office via a common corridor.

Special resources are available for various subjects. There are four chemistry labs, three biology classrooms and an 'eco-garden' (an untended plot of land used for Biology lessons). There is also a number of handicraft rooms, an art room, a pupils' music room and a separate teachers' music room stocked with many different instruments. For pupils who might feel unwell there is a sick room, and for those who may want to do homework or study there is a work room in the basement furnished with desks and a sofa. In addition, a language lab has been set up. In one half of the room there are 18 individual 'listening' desks with headphones, a sound monitor and two OHPs. The other half is set up like a normal classroom with rows of desks and a greenboard. At the back of the lab there is a section with books, dictionaries, cassettes and scripts of radio plays. From what the English teachers told me, it seems that the teachers do not make use of the listening facilities often. The room is used more frequently as a normal classroom. .

Modern languages are taught by 14 teachers, 9 English teachers and 5 French teachers. Apart from English and French which are compulsory subjects, Latin and Russian are offered in the curriculum as optional subjects -they available from the 9th to the 13th class. There is no assessment procedure for Russian while a final exam needs to be taken for Latin.

### **School #5, Berlin**

This secondary school (*Realschule*) is situated north-west of the city centre, and forms part of a typical urban school complex where two other secondary schools (a

*Gesamtschule* and a *Gymnasium*) are run. It has been operating for forty years and takes its name after an impressionist painter and illustrator who lived and worked in Berlin. The total population of the school numbers 430 pupils and 40 teachers. According to the secretary of the school, unofficially, 75% of the school population belongs to minority groups (the official number cited is 50%). Of the 12 teachers who are responsible for teaching modern languages, 4 teach French and 8 teach English.

The school consists of two buildings linked together by a closed glass-plated bridge. There are five levels in the first building, and three levels in the second. All the labs, workshops and administration offices are located in the first building, while the normal classrooms are located in the second building. At the back of the school, there is a paved concrete quadrangle with trees and benches. Two concrete table-tennis constructions have been set up and there is an open basket ball court and a street-ball court nearby. The school also has a fully-equipped closed gym.

At the main entrance hall, one's attention is drawn to an array of photographs of athletic and theatrical events which have been organised by the school. There is a display of pupils' art work on the wall, including some of the most interesting papier mâché masks. In another section of the hall, a series of Sports certificates awarded to the school between 1977 and 1989 also hang on display.

The school has 16 classrooms. Each classroom has a built-in cupboard where various equipment, such as maps, cassette recorders, an OHP, etc. is stored. In addition to these normal classrooms, there are specially-equipped classrooms for the teaching of Geography, Music and Art, where all the material necessary for the teaching of each respective subject is kept and made available to the pupils. Similarly, there are fully equipped Physics and Chemistry labs, a Biology lab, an Information Technology room, three Crafts workshops, (for wood- and metal-, and electrical work) and a Kitchen. Other resources include a Projection room with a filming machine, TV and video player, and a small library for teachers and pupils which is open only during school hours, i.e. during the first long break.

The staff room is a large rectangular room with large curtained windows and plants on the window ledges. Most of the space in this room is taken up by five rectangular desks, each of which can seat a group of 7 teachers in comfortable, red chairs. A kitchenette, a wash basin and a mirror stand in one corner of the room, while on the other side there is a photocopier and two tape recorders. The side walls are fitted with shelves; above them hang noticeboards with posters on political or social events, the school timetable and relevant memos. In addition, there are coat hangers, two big cupboards and individual cubicles for teachers to put their papers and other belongings. A door to one side leads into a much smaller room which functions as a separate smokers' room. There are piles of files, papers, books and stationery on every surface.

### **School #6, Berlin**

This school is located in one of the most densely populated districts on the West side of the city (with ca. 15000 citizens per 1km<sup>2</sup>). Surrounded by large buildings of an 1870s urban landscape, the school is almost concealed from view. One has to pass a set of large, wide iron gates and walk along a cobblestone lane to approach the red-brick buildings where the business of teaching and learning takes place. The number of teaching staff totals 44, amongst which there are 15 teachers who are responsible for the teaching of English and French. The pupil population numbers 384. On average, there are 18-20 pupils in a class.

The general brightness and neatness of the surroundings is evidence that the school has been renovated and extended (the refurbishing took place between 1987 and 1990). This has been part of an effort to upgrade the region and to offer the young better schooling conditions and motivation for education. Many of the pupils come from unstable family backgrounds where, for example, both parents have to work, some parents are divorced, others are unemployed, etc. Thus, the school is committed to providing a rich, supportive learning environment. Special efforts are made to help all pupils acquire a sound knowledge-base and to pass their school-



leaving examinations successfully. It was described as an 'ordinary' neighbourhood school.

An impressive feature of the school is its idiosyncratic architecture, which is a combination of the traditional and the modern. An eloquently constructed glass and metal corridor connects the one building with the other. Two pairs of hexagonal towers extend from the main building. From the inside, the towers function as classrooms suitable for small groups and are linked to two larger via connecting doors.

The main building has got three levels. At ground level there are two fairly large and overfilled staff rooms, the headmaster's and secretary's offices, and the sickbay. On this level there is also a kitchen and canteen, the caretaker's office, the cleaning room, and an elevator especially installed for disabled people. All along the walls of the ground-floor corridors there are photographs showing pupils playing musical instruments and collages of classes taking part in various sports events and excursions. All the normal classrooms (16 in total) are located on the second level while on the third level there are two fully-equipped Physics and Chemistry laboratories, a sewing room, a kitchen for cookery, an art room, a language lab, and a computer room. Over on the other building there is a closed gym, a library, a photography room and two large workshops (for wood- and metalwork).

School #6 operates as a *Haupt-* and a *Realschule*, where the 'R(ealschule) curriculum' comes into effect at the beginning of the 9th grade, where pupils undertake a more difficult program of study leading to the more advanced school leaving certificate. Moreover, it is designated as an all-day school, since the program extends from 8.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. (including midday meals and extra curricular activities) thus enabling the pupils to develop and share a communal life. The first hours of the day are devoted to cognitively more demanding subjects like German, Physics, Chemistry, History, etc. The second part of the day, after the lunch break, is taken up by easier subjects such as Music, Art, Sport, extra tuition in Turkish, etc. The normal duration of a lesson is forty minutes, but subjects are usually taught in

blocks of two lessons, i.e. for eighty minutes. The school program consists of both compulsory and optional subjects.

As around 50% of the pupils at the school have Turkish origins, special times are allocated for tutoring in the Turkish language plus additional German language classes. This is part of an overall effort to integrate minority groups into the school community, to facilitate their socialisation and to help them overcome their first and second language difficulties. In addition, the school seeks to maximise the pupils' potential in developing their foreign language skills. While two foreign languages are available in the school program, English is compulsory for all pupils and is taught four hours a week. Emphasis is placed on helping pupils to get a basic vocational orientation and training for specific professions that are in demand. Thus, from the 7th grade onwards, pupils are offered vocational training courses four times a week, in subjects such as Health and Nutrition, Textile manufacture, Woodwork, Metalwork, Electronics, Typing, Technical drawing, Photography and others.

### **6.1.3 General findings**

As far as school size is concerned, all three Greek schools (#1, #2 and #3) are relatively comparable as they show no great variation in population size. Also, the information on the neighbourhoods in which they are located suggests that the pupil populations (as a whole) most likely experience similar sociocultural influences as concerns intellectual development, vocational prospects, mentality, as well as attitudes and interest towards school matters and learning. The German schools contain populations which appear to be proportionate to the popularity of the respective school type, e.g. there is a difference of over 200 pupils between schools #4 and #6. However, to the extent that they are all central-city schools, their pupils are subject to similar urban community influences. All school reputations appear to be compatible, roughly at mid-point on a progression scale. The average teacher-pupil ratios in the Greek and German schools are fairly close, 1:29 and 1:27 respectively. Primary foreign languages offered are English and French, though the

number of teaching staff in the two contexts varies from 2-3 teachers in the Greek schools to 7-15 teachers in the German schools.

The Greek schools are supplied with basic resources such as textbooks, maps, tapes, etc. while some of the technical apparatus and educational materials are not always sufficient in amount and variety so as to be used by several teachers. Often one item is available for use by one teacher only. Such was the case, for example, in school #1 and in school #3. Libraries and Information Technology hardware are just beginning to be set up. The German schools lack little in the way of resources and facilities, and supplies could be described as being more than adequate. Apart from the specially designed and fully supplied laboratories for Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Geography and Homecrafts as well as an array of instruments available for the Music class that could be found in every school, there was a stock of learning material and technical equipment in each classroom.

One evident difference can be seen in the physical setting of the schools and the staff rooms in particular: the clinical versus lively decor, the presence/absence of school-work displays, and the cramped versus spacious workplaces. An observation that can be made about the classroom setting is that the German classrooms appeared more pupil-friendly: project work was put up on the walls, curtains hung from the windows, there were coat racks at the back of the class, and sometimes pot plants were arranged on the window-ledge. The formal arrangement of the desks and chairs appeared to be the most common and convenient way of organising the large groups of pupils. The only exception was school #6, where the pupils sat in small groups around clusters of desks.

**6.2 Teacher characteristics**

School 1	School 2	School 3
Teacher A Teacher B	Teacher C Teacher D	Teacher E Teacher F

### 6.2.1 The Greek teachers

The teachers from the first school I visited were quite friendly and helpful, and said they were used to having university pupils coming to the school. Both teachers, A and B are female in their mid- to late-thirties. Teacher A obtained her First Degree in 1976 and B obtained hers in 1975, both from the University of Athens, Department of English Language and Literature. Teacher A has been teaching in the state sector for 18 years, specifically, eight years at schools in the upper secondary level (lyceum) and ten years at the lower secondary level (gymnasium) in and around the province of *Attiki*. Teacher B's experience covers a period of 19 years, divided into seven years' of teaching at private *frontistiria*, six years at lower secondary level in the province of *Fthiotida*, and another six years at lower secondary level in *Attiki*. At the time of my collaboration with the school, teacher B held a double teaching post at two different secondary schools, presumably in order to cover the required working hours. Teacher A took part in one in-service training session in the period 1987-88, while teacher B mentioned partaking in "numerous" in-service seminars though she could not recall details. Although both were curious about what the pupils would be asked in the interviews, they were very discreet during the data collection process.

It emerged from our talk that teacher A seems to have a resigned attitude towards teaching English, tending to adopt passive rather than pro-active behaviour, in other words, going by the reactions and moods of the class and choosing to carry out activities that the class does more readily and easily. Part of her discontent stems from her belief that the way the textbook is organised is impractical, and that she ends up with an overload of work instead of getting smoothly through the lesson:

"you can't expect from a ...tired teacher to constantly search for exercises or to have the acuteness of mind to transform what is already in the book into something else".

Another daunting aspect which filters through is that the pupils themselves appear to have an *a priori* negative attitude towards the English lesson: they are uninterested, uncooperative and unwilling to participate, and all this makes teaching a very trying experience. Teacher B was quite forthright in expressing her attitudes towards

teaching English: she is clearly disillusioned with the state of affairs in her classroom, to the extent that she loses her temper and feels completely negative towards the pupils. Her remark that "*the lack of interest literally breaks the teacher*" seems to echo a bitter impression derived from her own experience.

The English teachers (C and D) from the second school are female, aged between 35-45 years. They seemed quite prepared to let me observe their classes and interview their pupils but at the same time they remained rather aloof, perhaps owing to feelings of insecurity about having an outsider enter the private territory of their classrooms, and were careful with their words during the interviews. Teacher C graduated from the department of English language, Athens University in 1975, and has been teaching at various *gymnasias* for eighteen years. Throughout the span of her career, she has participated in two teacher training seminars, in January 1975 and June 1976. Teacher D obtained her first degree in 1980 from Athens University and has had fourteen years teaching experience, six years at a *frontistirio*, and eight years in two rural and two urban secondary schools in the Peloponnese. She mentioned having obtained an in-service training certificate for a course she attended in the past.

Teacher C did not appear to be a particularly enthusiastic about her job -perhaps owing to the accumulating years, the routine, or the less than ideal working conditions. She also tended to be evasive in expressing her views about problem areas in the lesson procedure. Her answers were brief and rather curt and she only indirectly recognised that the English lessons are less than satisfactory:

"We don't have the leeway to do anything better I think. We don't have other choices. Not that this is ideal, but we don't have choices".

While agreeing with the general claim that the teaching and learning of English is unsatisfactory in state schools, she avoided going into concrete details regarding the lessons *per se* but explicitly expressed her disapproval for the current textbook. A solution for her would be to have freedom in the choice of textbooks, smaller classes and homogeneous groups of pupils. Having not experienced such desirable changes over so many years, in practice, teacher C sees herself as a controller-instructor with



a *"get the lesson over and done with"* attitude. She doesn't seem to expect much from the pupils either, whose role she claims is *"predefined; ... to listen and learn"*.

Teacher D's attitude towards teaching English was difficult to determine, because there seemed to be a contradiction between her own perceptions about her teaching and her actual behaviour in the classroom. By presenting an agreeable picture of the state of affairs in her classroom, she conveyed an underlying positive attitude and an impression of herself as friendly and eager to keep the lesson interesting:

"the climate is pleasant in this class because I make a super-human effort. ...  
I will always enter with a smile, we will tell a joke, we will say something serious,  
we will say something to break the ice if at some moment we have tension..."

Furthermore, she described her classes as *"willing"* and *"enthusiastic"*. However, none of the above situations as described by teacher D actually appeared in the lessons I observed. In fact, there appeared to be distance between teacher and pupils and a distinct coldness in the classroom.

In our first encounter, both teachers (E and F) listened tentatively to my plan and were rather reserved towards me. Teacher E's first reaction was to tell me that she didn't have time for me because she had fallen behind with the syllabus and would now have to rush through the material. Her initial unwillingness to become involved in the research came across when she said that she was not obliged to allow me into her classroom. She began to feel more at ease with my presence only after consulting with the principal and asking me more about my research interests and my collaboration with the other schools. Likewise, teacher F was reluctant and nervous during our first couple of meetings. She would avoid eye contact with me and repeatedly flip through her papers. However, she too became less guarded later on and my visits to the classroom and the interviewing worked out quite well.

Teacher E obtained her first degree from the University of Athens, department of English Language and Literature in 1980, while teacher F graduated from the same university in 1978. Teacher E spent her first six years teaching at rural secondary schools, transferred to a technical-vocational school for three years and then took up a position at the current gymnasium where she has been teaching for the last five



years. To date, her teaching experience amounts to fourteen years. Teacher F has been a state-school teacher of English for fifteen years. At the beginning of her career she taught for a year at a rural upper secondary school (*lyceum*) and then spent a year teaching at a rural gymnasium. For the last thirteen years she has been working at the same school. Neither of the two teachers have undergone in-service training.

Among the comments made about working conditions and how teachers go about teaching English, teacher F stated that she always felt free to do whatever she liked in the classroom, consequently she never read the curriculum directive and does not know what teaching approach is officially proposed. Moreover, teacher E maintained that neither a teacher's manual nor any other explicit guide for the third grade exist, except for a booklet with answers to certain exercises.

Teacher E is not satisfied with the state of affairs in her English class. She seems to be frustrated with what she sees as the laziness and indifference her pupils show towards the lesson and tries to get through the hour with as little noise and disruption as possible. She finds that coming up against discipline problems in the class is exhausting and concludes:

"I don't have a good opinion about the way my lesson is organised. I don't like it, I just tolerate it."

Similarly, teacher F appears to be very unhappy with her job and claims herself that her attitude towards teaching English has become increasingly negative over the past three years. She finds it difficult to manage the class and seems to reach points where she loses her self-control:

"whenever I have tried -and in previous years- I cursed the moment. I cursed them, really cursed these pupils: "go to hell!"...".

Most of all she feels tired and ridden with tension:

"I'm taking a short walk before I go home so that I can relax my nerves. ... I am qualified to teach, not to act as police or guard..."

Moreover, she revealed that she feels guilty teaching English to the pupils and maintained that the learning of foreign languages should be optional rather than obligatory.

### 6.2.2 The German teachers

School #4	School #5	School #6
Teacher G Teacher H	Teacher I Teacher J	Teacher K

I was first brought into contact with teacher H who readily agreed to help me collect data at School #4 and who brought me in contact with teacher G, a fellow-colleague and *Director of studies* at the school, who showed an interest in my research. Both teachers were helpful, informative and patiently answered all my questions.

Teacher H is female, aged between 35-45 and obtained her 1st and 2nd *Staatsexamen* certificates in Berlin in 1986 and 1988. She has been teaching English and Physical Education for the past 8 years. She volunteers to participate in in-service training courses regularly, i.e. attends two courses of ten lessons per year in which ideas about teaching and teaching materials are exchanged between teachers.

Teacher G is male (the only male teacher in my data set) in his fifties and obtained his 1st and 2nd *Staatsexamen* certificates in 1970 and 1972. He has been teaching English for the last 25 years at the same school. Until 1990 he took part regularly in in-service training courses, but suspended them in order to devote more time to the planning and execution of the *Abitur* examinations.

Both teachers G and H seem to enjoy teaching English and claimed to get on with their classes quite well. They acknowledge that at times they may come up with problems in the classroom (such as inattentiveness or misbehaviour), but do not consider them as serious or insurmountable. However, they pointed out that sometimes the teacher's mood or the mood of the class can affect the atmosphere in the classroom.

Teacher I was, from the outset, very open to having me observe her classes and, in spite of the pressure of a full agenda, willingly spent a lot of time telling me about her experiences as a teacher in the USA and in France. Apparently, having a 'foreign person' in her classroom was not unusual for her, since she often receives visits from graduate pupils, whom she undertakes to train in a series of compulsory observation and teaching sessions.

Teacher I is in her mid-forties and has been in the teaching profession since 1972. She obtained her formal qualifications in 1974 and apart from teaching at secondary schools she also spent eight years abroad, teaching adult courses. She does not mention participating in teacher training programs but spent five years (1985-88) on a curriculum committee.

Teacher J was a little reluctant to agree to my request at first, but seems to have been persuaded by her colleague's unquestioning attitude in letting me into her classroom. Although she seems to have been somewhat nervous about my presence and the interviews, I believe she tried to be as helpful as she could.

Teacher J is also in her mid-forties and obtained her formal qualifications in 1973 and 1974 and has been working at the same school since her recruitment. She recalls taking part in short (2-day) in-service training seminars in 1992 and 1994. She appears to have established a set of 'ground rules' which determine the lesson procedure to a certain extent: in her class, each pupil need not have more than one exercise book for writing exercises and homework; there is no writing of vocabulary lists, pupils are given short exercises to do, on the whole writing is not given so much importance; on the contrary, those who speak (i.e. who are active in class) *"will never get a five"*, i.e. a low grade. Her main concern, as it emerged from our talk, is to ensure that each of her pupils achieves something as far as they can, without putting pressure on them.

Teacher K volunteered to take part in this study after the head of the school informed the staff of the purpose of my visit. She was very co-operative from the start, and very punctual in her transactions with me. She gave the impression of a cheerful, open, friendly but at the same time firm-willed person. Teacher K is under 35 years

of age and obtained her 1st and 2nd *Staatsexamen* certificates in 1986 and 1988 respectively. Her working experience covers a span of seven years, during which time she has worked in two *Haupt-/Realschulen*. Although she feels at times overwhelmed by the pressure of work, which makes it "*very hard to make really good lessons*", teacher K gave the impression of someone who is committed to her work, and who consciously strives to make the lessons interesting for the benefit of her pupils:

"I am not always satisfied with my lessons but...I try to motivate the pupils sometimes with games, puzzles, or things I bring with me in the lesson. ... You always have to develop things and to reflect, to think about things you did".

### **6.2.3 General findings**

Teachers differ in their habitual teaching practice or teaching style on account of their age, qualifications and training, experience, personality traits, as well as whether they are male or female (Dusek, 1985). 'Who they are' affects the way they go about teaching and how differently they handle the ups and downs of their daily encounters with their classes. While this is an indisputable fact, some of the information gathered about the teachers of this sample makes it possible to 'rank' them in a roughly homogeneous category. Specifically, all teachers are female and aged between 35 and 45 years, with the exception of teacher G who is over 45 years of age and male, and teacher K who is under 35 years old. All teachers have the basic state qualifications: teachers A-F possess a First degree issued by the University of Athens and a Certificate of Proficiency in English, and teachers G-K are holders of the 1st and 2nd *Staatsexamen* certificates. As regards teaching experience, all teachers have spent an average of 16 years on the job, with the exception of teachers H (8) and K (6 years).

The data regarding training opportunities presented the greatest diversity. The Greek teachers A, B, C, D, E and F entered the profession without any practical pre-service preparation. Teacher B stated that she has taken part in "numerous" in-service sessions, teacher C recalled attending two sessions in 1975 and 1976, while teachers A and D reported having attended just one in-service training seminar in the whole of

their teaching careers. Also, contact with the school adviser is rated by the majority as being rather poor.

For the German teachers, pre-service preparation is part of the final cycle of their basic studies. Moreover, teachers G, H and K confirmed that they have regularly attended annual in-service training courses. Teacher J mentioned having been to two sessions while teacher I offered no specific information on the subject.

## 6.3 Pupil characteristics

### 6.3.1 The Greek classes

The number of pupils per class ranged between 27 (class B) to 31 (classes D, E, F). The six classes were formed by a total of 77 male and 86 female pupils aged 14-15-years. As concerns the index 'socio-economic background', the majority of the pupils came from lower-middle or middle households, as the examples below indicate<sup>51</sup>:

Class	Socio-economic status	Parental Occupations
A	lower- middle /middle	teacher, car mechanic-electrician, civil servant, shop owner.
B	lower-middle /middle	bank clerk, accountant, housewife, civil servant
C	lower middle /middle	legal adviser, teacher, naval officer, clerk, factory worker, technician, civil servant.
D	lower-middle	furniture maker, housewife, freelance tradesman, shop owner, electrician.
E	lower-middle	factory worker, pensioner, housewife, carpenter, shop owner, electrician, civil servant.
F	lower-middle /middle	housewife, civil servant, pensioner, judicial employee, freelance tradesman, handicraftsman.

The majority of the pupils in all classes has had at least 3 years of English instruction (officially) and their level of competence, as rated by the teachers, was "*mixed ability*", save that of class C which was classified as "*intermediate*".

Out of the 48 interviewees, 34 (70%) expressed positive attitudes towards the English language. They recognised the importance of learning it (class B), found it interesting to hear and speak (class D) and easy to learn (class C). The remaining pupils made neutral or conditional statements, like "*if you pay attention and study, it's okay*" (class E). As far as learning English at school was concerned, however, 31 (65%) pupils tended to regard it as a trivial activity which does not bring them any great gains. For example, some pupils stated that the lessons do not add to their knowledge (class D), while others explained that the lessons function as an escape route from the routine of other subjects - a time to have fun, or sleep or prepare for the next lesson (class A). Yet, 11 others (23%) agreed that doing English at school is a good thing, because it's easy, undemanding, and a good way of revising things already learnt at the *frontistirio* and filling gaps (classes C, E).

### **6.3.2 The German classes**

The number of pupils per classroom varied between 12 (class K) and 26 pupils (class I). Taken together, they total 50 male and 62 female pupils in the 14-15-year age group. From the biographical data, it can be surmised that pupil socio-economic backgrounds tend to fall chiefly in the lower-middle or middle category, as the examples below show:



Class	Socio-economic status	Parental Occupations
G	lower- middle /middle	cook, barkeeper, artist, educator, teacher, salesperson, shop owner.
H	lower-middle /middle	sales-assistant, teacher, writer, furniture remover, photographer.
I	lower-middle /middle	doctor, nurse, manual worker, insurance broker, police officer.
J	lower /lower-middle	manual worker, artist, builder, salesperson, carpenter.
K	lower	cleaner, crane driver, housewife.

Classes G to K have had two years of English instruction. As rated by the teachers, the level of competence of classes I and K was "*beginners*", while classes G, H and J were described as "*advanced beginners*" or "*lower intermediate*".

On the whole, 32 individual pupils' statements (89%) about the English language were positive, thus revealing favourable attitudes. For example, English was described as a nice, simple and easy language (class G), and essential to one's education (class H). The question of learning English in school was met favourably too. Out of all the responses, 29 (80%) were affirmative and were expressed through remarks such as '*it's fun to learn [English] at school*' (class G) and "*the lessons are interesting*" (class K).

### 6.3.3 General findings

In view of their age, the pupils in the sample of this study hold similar assumptions about school and school work (which they do not find particularly exciting), including the study of language (whose value they recognise). The information regarding parental occupation suggests that the social background in which the subjects live is one where they are motivated to perform well in school so as to increase their chances of a successful future or a better life, since it is maintained that lower-middle/middle-class homes foster educational achievement (Craft, 1970). As

adolescents, they experience stable and unstable phases and are confronted with similar family and school pressures.

Overall, it can be inferred that the tendency on the part of the Greek classes towards the English lessons is to play down their value, whereas the German classes revealed a positive predisposition towards English lessons at school, or were at least untroubled about the way the lessons occur.

## 6.4 The teaching process

### 6.4.1 Observations of the Greek English lessons

#### Lesson A

<b>Type of school:</b> <b>School:</b>	state gymnasium #1
<b>Teacher's name:</b> <b>Sex:</b> <b>Age:</b> <b>Qualifications:</b> <b>Teaching experience:</b> <b>Social Background:</b>	A F 35-45 BA in English, 1973, Athens University 18 years at various upper and lower secondary schools in and around the province of Attiki. Greek national
<b>Class level:</b> <b>No. of pupils:</b> <b>Age:</b> <b>Materials:</b>	beginner to FCE 30 14-15 yrs. <i>Taskway English 3</i> , 'Extra', pp 114 plus use of black-board.
<b>Seating arrangements:</b>	The pupils sit at individual desks which are set in four rows, facing the teacher. The teacher stands near the writing-board. She moves from one side to the other at the front of the classroom and occasionally strolls to the back.

This lesson can be divided into three parts: the first part is a combination of an oral revision and homework check, while the second part is taken up by a reading activity and an accompanying task as set out in the book (*Taskway English 3*). This activity

leads on to the third part of the lesson where the teacher lectures the class on orthographic and pronunciation differences between Greek and English.

### **Description of lesson A**

We are in a large rectangular classroom where the desks are fairly well spaced out, conforming to the traditional row-by-row layout. From one corner of the class near the black-board, the teacher's desk faces the direction of the pupils. Just above the desk hangs a poster depicting an ancient Greek theatre, and above the black-board is an icon of the Virgin Mary holding the infant Jesus. There are two rows of high windows on either side of the classroom. The walls are painted pale yellow and are bare except for some scribbling and drawings.

The lesson begins with the teacher (A) asking the class whether they did their homework and promptly getting a number of "no's" as an answer. She has automatically initiated what is known as the traditional 'testing phase' in the lesson, where a few members of the class volunteer or are selected to give oral feedback on what they have learnt or written from the previous lesson. They are subsequently graded on what they have done or said. On this occasion there is some confusion as to what homework was set, since the teacher maintains that the class had to write a congratulatory letter, while the pupils claim that they were asked to write their personal opinions about computer assisted language learning. From my notes I see that the latter is indeed what the teacher allocated as homework and I notice that a nearby pupil has scribbled a reminder in her textbook: "*opinion about this*" in Greek, which I take as verification. However, teacher A insists that the class has done the wrong thing. Perhaps the reason for this insistence is not wanting to lose face in the presence of an 'outsider'.

As it is customary in nearly all subjects to devote the first few minutes of the lesson to revising previously-taught subject matter, teacher A's opening questions serve this very purpose. She attempts to recall the topic of the previous lesson as it appears in the textbook, which is about a letter written by a group of schoolchildren ("*children*

*of Plymouth*") in support of the human teacher in a language learning situation as opposed to pupils learning from a thinking machine (see Appendix Q1 for a copy of the material). The pupils appear hesitant and no-one attempts to answer the question, so the teacher allocates turns to a number of pupils, using recitation or evaluative questions, followed by clues and frequent prompts in order to elicit the correct answers. One of the girls volunteers to say that it was about computers substituting teachers. At the same time, teacher A notices that another pupil looks puzzled and asks her to account for her expression. The girl questions the accuracy of her classmate's statement but the teacher interprets the girl's utterance as a sign that she hasn't studied and questions her on the *Letter to the Editor* until she is satisfied with the answers she receives (l. 95- 111).

Teacher A returns to the issue about the assigned homework, insisting that the class had to write a positive-sounding letter as "*children of Plymouth*". This sparks off a dispute, as some pupils spontaneously protest that they were told to write their own opinion (l. 138-154). Finally, the teacher nominates a pupil to read out his opinion and attempts to get feedback from the class about the contents of his letter, though without success. She requests that he repeat the part where he mentions some advantages of computers and cautions the rest of the class to pay attention to what he is saying. However, after the second reading, teacher A does not refer back to it as would be expected, but selects another pupil to read out her work.

The teacher notices that am cupping my hand behind my ear, so she takes the pupil's book and reads the composition aloud a second time. In *sotto* voice she remarks that "*something must be done with the prepositions*" (l. 227-228), and begins to rebuke her for not following the directions in the textbook according to which the letter should be a positive-sounding one. A second round of debate and protest follows (l. 239-244). Then, the teacher modifies her approach and asks to hear some advantages of computers in the school while dismissing the contributions of pupils who support the opposite view in their written homework.

It appears that teacher A's main concern is to get the class to respond to a constant line of questioning which, aside from aiming to assess their comprehension of a previously taught text and to check the homework, reflects her conviction that they have done it all wrong and that they should express *favourable* opinions about computer assisted language learning (this observation is supported by the fact that the teacher makes 13 allusions to the "advantages" of computers (e.g. l. 289; l. 550; l. 565-569).

Before proceeding to the lesson of the day, teacher A allocates homework that requires the pupils to concentrate on the advantages of computers, in different ways: first she asks the class in English, to recount the advantages of choosing a machine *after "a very bad experience of having a teacher teaching them a foreign language"* (l. 405-411). Shortly afterwards she asks them to read the '*Letter to the Editor*' again, *"find the disadvantages they mention for computers and the advantages they mention for teachers, and try to turn them and present... the exact opposite advantages and disadvantages that are possible..."* (l. 502-512). Finally, after a pupil asks her to clarify whether they should write the disadvantages from the other letter (meaning the '*Letter to the Editor*'), the teacher explains with vexation that *"the children of Plymouth present the advantages of computers ...so you [the class] have to present their own idea, not! yours"* (l. 565-568). No further questions are asked and teacher A proceeds with the presentation of the new material in the textbook.

There is a short article in the book entitled "*Enigma and Dilemma*", which constitutes a commentary on the position of a certain historian on technological/scientific development (Appendix Q1). The text contains a large number of words originating from Greek . As a way of introducing this text, teacher A employs a reversal strategy; she cites a number of words that are derived from English but are included in the vocabulary of contemporary spoken Greek (for example, the word "*koularo*" which comes from the English 'cool' and means "to calm down, be cool") and invites the class to identify the origins of such words.

The change of topic appeals to some of the pupils (especially the boys) who liven up and begin to call out similar such neologisms. Teacher A asks the class to explain the

origin and meaning of the words they come up with and they are quick to respond *impromptu*, shouting out synonymous expressions in Greek. The teacher then invites the class to look at some words that came into the English language much earlier than English words were incorporated into Greek. She reads the instructions to Task 1 aloud, which require the pupils to guess why this article is incomprehensible to a Norwegian. The pupils remain silent and the teacher provides the answer in a humorous way with the intention of making a joke: "*because these [sic] are Greek to the Norwegian, eh?*" (l. 739).

At this point one of the pupils raises her hand. Upon getting a turn, she begins to read the passage from the book aloud and pauses after the first few words, looking up to get the teacher's assent. The teacher permits her to continue with the reading and subsequently leads the accompanying set task. According to the instructions the task for the pupils is to underline all the original Greek words as well as Greek-derived compound words in the article for which they should "*give the appropriate equivalents in Greek*" (l. 744-745). All the Greek words that are given by nominated pupils are repeated by the teacher.

Turning to the black-board, teacher A proceeds to explain certain rules that determine the pronunciation and orthography of Greek vocabulary that has been incorporated into the English language (l. 939-1047). From this point onwards most of the verbal interaction is conducted in Greek.

Teacher A points out that the letters -ch- found in Greek-derived words are rendered as /k/ in English and attempts to elicit a rule whereby words with the suffix -ia in Greek, are written with -y in English. She also provides the information that words in Greek with a hard breathing accent or an acute accent are written with an *h* in English. (In the meantime some of the pupils concern themselves with a spelling error that the teacher has made on the blackboard, while the commotion which has been going on for some time escalates).

Raising her voice over the noise, teacher A continues to lecture on the place of Greek and English in the Indo-European family of languages and asks two potentially communicative questions in Greek: why so many Greek words have been adopted in



the English language, and what kinds of words have entered the English language. The class is overtly inattentive by now, so teacher A sets these two questions as homework.

With the sound of the bell, she repeats the homework she has assigned and while the pupils are moving about and leaving the classroom, a small company of girls approach their teacher and start a discussion about the muddle concerning the previous homework assignment.

## Lesson B

<b>Type of school:</b> <b>School:</b>	state gymnasium #1
<b>Teacher's name:</b> <b>Sex:</b> <b>Age:</b> <b>Qualifications:</b> <b>Teaching experience:</b>  <b>Social Background:</b>	B F 35-45 BA in English, 1975, Athens University. 19 years: 7 years at various <i>frontistiria</i> , 6 years at rural schools and 6 years at urban gymnasias. Greek national.
<b>Class level:</b> <b>No. of pupils:</b> <b>Age:</b> <b>Materials:</b>	intermediate to pre-FCE 27 14-15 yrs. <i>Taskway English 3</i> , pp 122-125, plus use of black-board
<b>Seating arrangements:</b>	The pupils sit in twos facing the teacher, at desks which are set in rows. The teacher stands at the front of the class.

Teacher B first takes the class through three Tasks (Section 4 in the Unit) which relate to the topic of problem-solving and giving advice, which focus grammatically on advice expressions and the various ways of rendering them. Some time is given for the preparation of a guided role play and finally in the last few minutes the teacher attempts to organise the class to work on a group activity. The whole lesson is carried out at a brisk pace.

## Description of Lesson B

We are in a large classroom with standard furniture and a pin-board with photos hanging above the teacher's desk. Teacher B briskly hurries in and begins to enforce order at once, openly reminding the class of my presence. I seize this moment to try to appear as unthreatening as possible, so as I make my way toward the back of the classroom, I greet some pupils smilingly. Some greet me back. The teacher orients the class to the appropriate pages in the textbook and asks, almost in an undertone, if there are any questions. Some affirmative responses are heard, but she does not probe them further.

The lesson begins with an oral revision of taught vocabulary where the names of various athletic events are elicited from individual pupils. This task seems to occur in place of the traditional 'test' phase. It is not a particularly demanding task since all the terms have already been filled in under appropriate pictures in the pupils' textbooks, and all they need to do is to read them out (see Appendix Q2, l. 68-122). Once this vocabulary drill is completed and a couple of 'communicative' questions are asked additionally (l. 123, 128), the class is led into the lesson of the day, which begins with Task 1.

Task 1 has to do with a conversation between two friends who are also athletes and are discussing a problem that one of the two is facing. According to the instructions in the textbook, this is a listening activity, but it is treated as a reading activity because, as teacher B explains *"there are no cassettes and the cassette player is only one for all the teachers and so there is a problem"* (l. 163-164).

Two pupils volunteer to read out the parts of the two characters in the dialogue. After the reading the teacher asks a number of comprehension questions, the answers to which can be inferred either directly from the dialogue or from the pupils' background knowledge of the world, as in the following examples: *"what happens if you think positively?"* (l. 271-272) and *"what's yoga in your own words, what's that?"* (l. 294-295).

Although teacher B makes an effort to encourage the pupils in expressing their own ideas, she has certain predetermined ideas about how her questions should be answered, so she tends to override the responses that do not match her own expectations. Shortly afterwards, the teacher returns to the transcript and initiates a vocabulary activity where she elicits English words or expressions by giving the Greek equivalent or translation.

In between the reading and the vocabulary activity, one particular exchange sparks off the first negative affective episode in the lesson:

\*T-B: how does she [Wanda] feel.  
MAR?  
\*MAR: bad.  
(l. 239-241)

At this pupil's single-word response, the teacher explodes with anger. In a sharp tone of voice, teacher B criticises her response (i.e. not giving a full answer) as well as her behaviour (i.e. chewing the back of a pen) (l. 243-260). The teacher expresses extreme irritation for not getting a complete answer and justifies her loss of composure in this way. However, she does not react as strongly on ensuing occasions where pupils produce other erroneous utterances such as the one below:

\*T-B: what is the purpose [of the conversation] SPI?  
\*SPI: it's to advice Daniel eh advice Daniel Wanda.  
\*T-B: this! is the purpose of the conversation.  
(l. 459-461)

They are accepted without being corrected syntactically. A more likely reason for the teacher's outburst may well be that the pupil in the first episode had simply been caught not paying attention to the lesson, and the teacher reacted impulsively, either because of my presence or in spite of it.

Teacher B proceeds to the vocabulary explanation and reading comprehension questions (l. 441-442). Subsequently, she nominates a pupil to read the instructions for Task 2 which involves finding the different types of advice expressions in the transcript (l. 485-495). After rephrasing the instructions in Greek herself she completes the first advice expression (l. 506) and prompts the class for the next one

(l. 509). In the meantime, she turns to the blackboard in order to illustrate the differences between English words that express advice-giving and -getting, and Greek equivalents which have a different suffix but the same root.

As the teacher is about to elaborate on the expression "*I'd rather*", a second negative episode occurs. She sees a pupil chewing gum, stops herself in mid-sentence and angrily turns to the pupil, castigating her and threatening to punish her if she chews gum again (l. 607-628). Everyone is silent. Regaining composure instantly as if nothing had happened, teacher B proceeds to elicit advice expressions from the class and praises those pupils who find the appropriate ones.

Next, as a way of practising more with the given expressions, she improvises somewhat by instructing the class to advise her on certain situations (l. 659; 687; 697; 704). She makes a point of reminding the class of her status so that their responses are appropriately respectful. After responses to three of her 'situations' are elicited, a pupil is nominated to read the instructions to Task 3 (l. 711-712). The task involves reading three advice options, selecting one and formulating an appropriate advice expression (a full sentence) with it. This is soon completed, so the teacher orients the class to the guided role play (l. 748). She reads the information provided for the speakers A and B aloud, and tells the class what they must do. Two minutes time is given for this activity, at the end of which one pair is nominated to read their dialogue out aloud (l. 832-848).

At this point, the class is given homework (l. 855-958). Normally this would signal the end of the lesson, but here, at breakneck speed, the teacher leads the class to an "*Extra*" activity involving group work. The activity is titled "*Dilemma and Decision*", where four people are supposed to give their opinions to a fifth person who cannot decide about her future career. Teacher B reads and translates the instructions and nominates pupils to read all the role descriptions aloud (l. 965-995). She mentions my presence a second time and ignoring the pupils' protests that there is no time left, she hurriedly divides the class into groups of three and four, with a lot of gestures and orders (l. 1023-1062). An uproar develops instantly. The teacher hits the desk with the palm of her hand and presses the class to get on with it, insisting

that they can. However, before anybody can really get involved, the bell rings and the lesson is over.

## Lesson C

<b>Type of school:</b> <b>School:</b>	state gymnasium #2
<b>Teacher's name:</b> <b>Sex:</b> <b>Age:</b> <b>Qualifications:</b>  <b>Teaching experience:</b> <b>Social Background:</b>	C F 35-45 BA in English, 1974 Athens University. Teacher Training Courses: January 1975, June 1976 18 years in urban and rural gymnasia. Greek national.
<b>Class level:</b> <b>No. of pupils:</b> <b>Age:</b> <b>Materials:</b>	beginner to FCE 28 14-15 yrs. Self-compiled handouts consisting of a text and exercises.
<b>Seating arrangements:</b>	The pupils sit two-by-two in rows facing the black-board. The teacher stands right at the front of the class, between the two middle rows. She does not move from this position at all throughout the lesson. She keeps looking at her copy of the exercises and uses eye contact to allocate turns.

In this lesson there is neither a testing phase nor a presentation phase. The subject matter involves answering closed questions based on a reading text and doing grammar exercises orally in lockstep.

## Description of Lesson C

The setting for this lesson is a fairly large classroom furnished with chairs, desks and a blackboard. The teacher's desk stands on a small platform in the right-hand corner of the classroom. Large windows provide a view of the quadrangle.

It is the last lesson before school is out for the day, so a certain degree of restlessness is to be expected. There is a great deal of commotion going on, pupils are shouting at

each other, scraping desks, banging windows. The teacher stands at the front and calls for order. I walk towards an empty desk at the back of the classroom and ask a pupil for a chair. Neither my presence nor the commands of the teacher appear to have any impact on the behaviour of the class, who fool about without reducing the noise they are making.

Amid all the commotion, some pupils exclaim that an exercise has been left undone from the previous lesson. Teacher C orients the class to the unfinished exercise but it is not clear whether this is part of her original lesson plan or whether it is a modification that has come about from the pupils' initiative (l. 20-27). They work with a photocopied sheet that contains a reading text, comprehension questions and grammar exercises, all written in the teacher's own rather illegible handwriting (Appendix Q3). The teacher avoids using the official textbook on the grounds that she cannot work with it.

The lesson begins with a gap-filling exercise which has been carried over from the previous lesson. Pupils take turns to read each sentence aloud and try to supply the correct preposition (e.g. l. 37-42). Next comes a transformation exercise on direct speech. The teacher has underlined a number of sentences from the text in reported speech and instructs the class to change each of them into direct speech (l. 121-128). One by one, each pupil gets a turn to do a sentence (e.g. l. 209-220). The teacher repeatedly reads the beginnings, the ends or even the complete given sentences almost simultaneously with each pupil (see for example l. 215-216; 278-279; 359-367). Once that exercise has been executed, the teacher distributes a new photocopy which has the same layout as the previous one and consists of a text with comprehension questions, and grammar exercises. In the background, there is a great deal of off-task commotion.

Again, individual pupils take turns to read extracts from the new passage aloud, and in-between the reading, the teacher interrupts to clarify unknown words (l. 374-392). At this point anyone can call out a word spontaneously and teacher C explains its meaning in Greek. In fact, she uses Greek for everything except reading what is on



the photocopied sheet. She initiates the next activity which is to answer the comprehension questions (l. 627-629). Although she expects the pupils to make full sentences, she often gives clues and even parts of the answer herself.

The next three exercises on the sheet involve converting sentences from direct into indirect speech and vice versa, and constructing sentences in indirect speech (l. 709-712). Teacher C instructs the class on what they are expected to do and again each pupil gets to read a sentence and formulate the answer correctly. Some extended teacher- pupil interaction occurs during the time when each pupil is attempting a conversion. That is, the teacher offers clues or asks questions that aim to help the pupils make the correct formulation (e.g. l. 752-770). All exchanges except for those that refer to the particular sentence that is being worked on, are conducted in Greek. The class is about to begin with another similar type of exercise when the bell rings and the lesson is over.

#### Lesson D

<b>Type of school:</b> <b>School:</b>	state gymnasium #2
<b>Teacher's name:</b> <b>Sex:</b> <b>Age:</b> <b>Qualifications:</b> <b>Teaching experience:</b>  <b>Social Background:</b>	D F 35-45 BA in English, 1980, Athens University. 6 years at a <i>frontistirio</i> and 8 years at various <i>gymnasias</i> in the province of <i>Achaia</i> . Greek national.
<b>Class level:</b> <b>No. of pupils:</b> <b>Age:</b> <b>Materials:</b>	beginner to FCE 31 14-15 yrs. <i>Taskway English 3</i> , Unit 11, Tasks 1, 2, 3 plus sentences on blackboard.
<b>Seating arrangements:</b>	the pupils sit at individual desks which are arranged in four rows, facing the blackboard.

This lesson is concerned with the execution of three Tasks in the textbook and a small supplementary exercise thought up by the teacher, all of which are based on a particular form and function, i.e. using the perfect infinitive to give advice.

### **Description of Lesson D**

Initially, the teacher stands at the front of the class close to one of the desks. Once the lesson is under way, she moves along the desks to the back of the classroom, looking down at pupils' work, and gradually makes her way back to the front again.

In the first few minutes, teacher D waits for everyone to open their books to the appropriate page. She sees that one pupil has not brought her book with her and covers the incident up, presumably to prevent it from coming to my attention. She confirms with the class that they are to continue with a Task whose theme is the observance of rules and regulations in a British hall of residence (l. 19-22). In the textbook, a visual focus is provided in the form of a notice-board with diverse notices pinned onto it. Since teacher D had already read out the accompanying introductory passage in the previous lesson and had told the class to spot the rules and regulations, she now invites the class to recall the theme they will be dealing with (l. 24-27), and the lesson *proper* commences from there.

Reading text aloud proves to be a familiar routine in the lesson procedure as someone automatically bids for a turn and begins to read the first of these announcements aloud from the imaginary notice-board. Other pupils continue in the same manner until all of the rules and regulations that appear, i.e. five in total, have been read out (l. 30-59). The teacher then asks the class to say which of these rules and regulations can be found in Greek hostels (l. 61-62). Apparently, she does this with a mind to emphasise the different ways in which hostels operate and to stimulate an awareness of cultural differences between the Greek and British way of life. She does not articulate this, however, so the pupils select three announcements without being entirely clear about the purpose of the task (l. 77; 80; 90). Subsequently, teacher D instructs the class to translate into Greek those rules and

regulations which "*supposedly*" can be found in a Greek hostel, advising them to pay "*particular*" attention to the way in which they will be written (l. 116-119), again without giving an explanation. As the class gets to work on the translations, she approaches a pupil who seems to be having difficulties and explains to him in Greek what he should do. After glancing over the shoulders of a couple of pupils, she interrupts the class and, switching to Greek, she declares that she does not want a translation of what they have in their books, but instead "*how it would be in a similar Greek hostel*" (l. 161-172). Some pupils are confused and one replies that it would be the same. They turn back to their books and some spontaneously ask her for the meanings of unfamiliar vocabulary. One pupil negotiates with the teacher whether they can translate just two items instead of doing them all.

Having not understood the teacher's instructions, when prompted to give feedback, all pupils recite all the rules and regulations that appear in Task 1, translated word for word (l. 256-329). Teacher D attempts to clarify what she wants the class to do by paraphrasing: she asks the class whether there is a difference between these rules and regulations and a similar notice-board in a Greek hostel (l. 330-331; 339-342). A couple of pupils volunteer to say that Greek notices might be syntactically more complex but that the meanings would be the same. A discussion follows in Greek and someone mentions that the English have different habits (l. 387-388). Teacher D immediately picks up on this point and elaborates on it by saying that they (i.e. the Greek people) would "*never feed the pigeons*" (l. 389-397). She adds that such texts need not conform to particular stylistic configurations and brings the activity to a close by advising the class to "*keep all this in mind*" (l. 410-411).

The teacher introduces Task 2 by reading the instructions and the accompanying example aloud. (Tasks 2 and 3 are supported visually by drawings of four pairs of pupils engaged in conversation, but with some of the speech bubbles empty). Task 2 is linked to Task 1, as the aim is to find which of the regulations each of four pupils forgot (l. 415-422). As the example in the book illustrates, it is designed to provide practice in using the perfect infinitive in order to express advice. It is carried out as

an oral activity and since the pupils are guided by both the appropriate tense and the given regulations, it takes a short time to do (l. 428-475).

Next, teacher D directs the class to Task 3. The pupils are instructed to assume the place of the speaker and fill in the empty speech bubbles by giving advice to the one who *"broke the rule"* (l. 480-482). To guide the class in forming their sentences, the teacher writes the appropriate grammatical form on the blackboard: *you should/could + perfect infinitive*. While the pupils are working on the task, she writes a set of sentences on the board, depicting situations where a rule has been broken (l. 502-504):

- a) Osha parked her car in front of the building.
- b) Kim wanted to have his dog in his room.
- c) The Italian wanted to play his guitar.

As soon as the appropriate answers to Task 3 are elicited, the teacher orients the class to the sentences on the blackboard and tells them to come up with suitable advice for each of the situations using the same grammatical form as in the previous Task.

The nominated pupils have difficulty in applying the perfect infinitive, particularly with b) and c). Teacher D spends time with each of the pupils discussing in Greek how the advice should be expressed (e.g. 589-610; 622-637), until one pupil questions the logic of giving advice in the perfect infinitive (i.e., using "should have") when situations such as b) *"Kim wanted to have his dog in his room"*, and c) *"The Italian wanted to play his guitar"*, express volition (e.g. l. 641-656).

A long dispute follows, in Greek, where each of the interlocutors tries to explain her point of view. The pupil argues that the verb *wanted* in sentence b) shows that Kim had not actually brought the dog in the room, so it would not be viable to give advice with *should/could* (l. 690-703), while teacher D maintains that the idea is to prevent Kim from bringing the dog (l. 707-712).

The sound of the school bell, however, brings their dialogue to an abrupt, unresolved end. The teacher allocates homework from the grammar book and dismisses the class.

## Lesson E

<b>Type of school:</b> <b>School:</b>	state gymnasium #3
<b>Teacher's name:</b> <b>Sex:</b> <b>Age:</b> <b>Qualifications:</b> <b>Teaching experience:</b> <b>Social Background:</b>	E F 35-45 BA in English, 1980, Athens University. 14 years at various regional gymnasias in the provinces of <i>Helia</i> and <i>Achaia</i> . Greek national.
<b>Class level:</b> <b>No. of pupils:</b> <b>Age:</b> <b>Materials:</b>	intermediate 21 present, 31 on class list 14-15 yrs. <i>Taskway English 3</i> , Unit 8, pp 122-124 and 126.
<b>Seating arrangements:</b>	the pupils sit two by two at desks which are set in four rows, facing the blackboard. The teacher's desk is placed in the front corner of the classroom, across the door, facing the pupils' desks.

### Description of Lesson E

A few minutes prior to the start of this lesson, the teacher and I find the headmistress at the door, chiding a group of (nine) boys for playing water fights during the break. All of them are soaked to the skin and for their misconduct they are banned from entering the classroom and sent to sit outside the head's office.

The teacher (E) enters the classroom looking very stern. She places her personal belongings and the tape recorder on her desk and starts writing a grammatical form on the blackboard, in silence. I move to the back, ask if a place is free and sit down. The room is filled with a great deal of banging and scraping noises and the pupils talk loudly with each other. External sounds also permeate the classroom as it is very close to the street and its side with the windows faces towards the quadrangle. As a result, the hubbub of passing traffic as well as the cries and whistles of children playing basketball in the quadrangle enter the room. The noise is rather unsettling for me, but nobody else seems to notice.

Teacher E calls for order by shushing the class and orienting them to the appropriate page in the book, where a task with a visual focus is provided with ten different photographs of athletes in action (Appendix Q5, l. 47-48).

At the bottom corner of the page there is a box listing the corresponding terms that identify what each of the ten athletes are doing. The Task is carried out as a vocabulary exercise. The teacher reads the instructions aloud, which are to write the correct term below each photograph, and also reads out the terms from the box one by one (l. 58-69). She refers the class to the example where "*pole vault*" is written below one of the photos and asks for the word in Greek (l. 71). Subsequently, every time the correct term is matched with a photo, the Greek equivalent is elicited from individual pupils (l. 72-154).

Once all the athletic terms are matched with the corresponding photos, the teacher reads out the title of the next section (*The Outsider*) and asks for the meaning of the word "*outsider*" (l. 156). The textbook supplies a listening activity here, in which Wanda, an athlete, is talking to her friend Daniel about her problem. The story is that Wanda is upset because her coach believes she is not in very good form. Daniel tries to console her and offers some advice.

Teacher E reads the instructions aloud and starts the tape (l. 177-179). She soon realises that the dialogue being played is from a past lesson and makes a remark to that effect, but lets it play right through anyway. During this time the pupils are overtly inattentive: some are biting their nails, playing with each others' hair, others are scribbling, or chatting in whispers. Meanwhile, bursts of external noise interpose the recorded dialogue.

After fumbling with the recorder for a few minutes, teacher E finds the proper place on the tape and the correct dialogue between Daniel and Wanda is played (l. 230-267). A few pupils have turned to the printed version at the back of the book, but I see that eight of them are looking at the wrong page (which made me wonder if they were only pretending to be following). Teacher E poses a series of questions regarding the contents of the conversation and four pupils contribute in the re-telling of what Daniel and Wanda's talk was about (l. 277; 311-314; 322-324).



Subsequently, teacher E reads the instructions to an auxiliary oral activity aloud. This time the class has to listen out for three advice expressions (l. 332-333). The conversation is heard once more (with the first few turns omitted), and then the teacher elicits from four pupils four types of advice expressions which she writes on the blackboard (l. 342; 347; 351; 355). Promptly, the pupils are asked to look at three alternative pieces of advice given in the book. Out of these, the pupils are invited to choose the one that they would suggest to Wanda. Three pupils pick one of each, and the lesson moves on to a guided role play.

Teacher E reads the instructions and the information aloud. The role play is once again a conversation between two friends. Person A, Ruth, is a young woman who wants to do sport professionally, but is hindered by her parents' wish to see her become a doctor. Person B, Walter, is a young swimming champion and he is talking the problem over with Ruth (l. 382-390). Teacher E reads out the first cue for person A and nominates one pupil to convert it into direct speech. Then she reads the cue for person B and nominates another pupil to reconstruct it accordingly. She employs the same sequence throughout, nominating a different pupil for each cue (e.g. l. 392-413). The last cue is open-ended, as the instructions are that the person B, Walter, gives another piece of advice. One pupil says something but his utterance is inaudible. Teacher E wraps up the exercise with her own suggestion, that Ruth could combine sport and medicine. Someone ventures to disagree but teacher E prevents further discussion of this point (l. 455-463).

An optional activity that would involve a group discussion is omitted, and the lesson continues with a reading activity in the next section of the unit. The section is entitled "*The agony column*" (l. 465) and refers to an advice column in a teenage periodical where contributors' problems are discussed by the columnist. The class is presented with the columnist's reply to a letter written by a young person who wants to travel to China as a substitute runner for a sports club, but has come up against his/her parents' objection.

Teacher E reads the instructions and the information box aloud to the class. She asks if anyone would like to read the letter, and one pupil volunteers (l. 465-474). (In the background, some of the pupils are chatting. One has the textbook of another subject on her lap and is memorising text from it). At the end of the reading, the teacher asks for unknown words for which she gives the Greek equivalents, and then poses a series of reading comprehension questions ( e.g. l. 515-516; 536). She then asks the class to find all the advice expressions in the letter, probably as a way of connecting this part of the lesson to the previous tasks. At that point the bell rings for the break. No homework is allocated. Everyone leaves the class.

## Lesson F

<b>Type of school:</b> <b>School:</b>	state gymnasium #3
<b>Teacher's name:</b> <b>Sex:</b> <b>Age:</b> <b>Qualifications:</b> <b>Teaching experience:</b> <b>Social Background:</b>	F F 45-55 BA in English, 1978 Athens University. 15 years , 13 of which at the current gymnasium. Greek national.
<b>Class level:</b> <b>No. of pupils:</b> <b>Age:</b> <b>Materials:</b>	beginner to FCE 30 14-15 yrs. <i>Taskway English 3</i> , Unit 6, sections 8 & 10, pp 92-95.
<b>Seating arrangements:</b>	The pupils sit in twos at desks which are set in rows facing the blackboard. The teacher stands at the front at first, but later moves to a number of desks along the farthest aisle, to instruct individual pupils.

The lesson is concerned with the execution of two Tasks from the textbook, dealing with types of schools in Britain and the United States. Initially, slips of paper that looked as if they were going to be used in the lesson were distributed by the teacher, but apart from becoming a source of surprise to the class they did not resurface.

## Description of Lesson F

In the first five minutes or so of this lesson, the teacher (F) makes three attempts to capture the attention of the class (App. Q6, l. 31; 49; 54). However, these attempts are drowned by loud talk, comments and exclamations, including singing and shouting out impudent requests. Within this short span of time, it emerges that at least five pupils do not have their *Taskway* books with them.

Teacher F opens her textbook and reads out the title of a new section in the unit, "*Education in Britain*", which constitutes the starting-point of the day's lesson (App. Q6, l. 53). Ignoring the ongoing racket, she begins to read the instructions to the first task (l. 59), which involves reading a text on the British educational system and completing the missing information from a corresponding graph. Her voice is audible only to those pupils who are sitting quite close to where she is standing. A pupil has apparently been nominated to read, as she is heard reading a part of the text on *Education in Britain* aloud (l. 63-69). Her neighbour, who is asked to continue reading, does so mechanically and so quickly that she skips a line, but this goes completely unnoticed.

Teacher F can barely be heard instructing the pupils to complete the diagram on the opposite page (l. 82-85). She goes from one desk to the next, pointing to the gaps in the graph and repeating the instructions in Greek. In the meantime, two pupils are standing up in mock fighting positions, another two are looking into their History book and discussing what they are supposed to have memorised for their next lesson.

Approximately five minutes later, teacher F calls out to the class to listen to one of their classmates, with no visible effect. The pupil reads out the names of the different types of school that should appear on the graph (l. 109-115). Then the teacher approaches a group of pupils at the far end of the classroom. From the various movements it appears that she has asked one pupil to go up to the front and write something on the blackboard. After exchanging some words with the teacher, he draws some lines and writes down a few of the types of school that exist in the Greek

educational system: *Primary school, High school* (l. 124-128). Another pupil is told to get up and write the remaining types: *Nursery school, University, Polytechnic* (l. 132-136). In the meantime all over the room pupils are scribbling, chatting, hitting each other, throwing books about.

Once the diagram on the blackboard is done, teacher F turns the page and skips a section entitled "*The sort of schooling offered*", designed to get pupils decide on what criteria they would choose the right secondary school from a set of twenty questions. To make herself heard, she shouts out the title of the following section, "*A new kind of school*". It refers to a new type of school established in the United States, known as the "Freedom School". After pointing two pupils to the right place, she begins to read the information box aloud (l. 139-148). Very little of the dialogue is audible from that point onwards. The classroom sounds like the waiting room of a train station. However, it becomes clear from fragments of the teacher's talk that she is trying to start the pupils on the accompanying task. The idea is to read six speech bubbles given on the page, and to identify whether the speaker is a parent, a teacher or a pupil. Further, the pupils should decide whether the comments on the "*Freedom School*" are positive or negative ones.

The teacher approaches some of her pupils individually, directs them to read the information box for themselves, gives them instructions and answers their questions. To demonstrate the task, she reads the first speech bubble aloud and provides the correct answer for it (l. 180-185). The majority of the pupils are screaming, shouting, whistling, and banging or tapping on the desks. Snippets of dialogue indicate that in spite of the commotion, teacher F continues with the second speech bubble and elicits answers from an individual pupil. She reads the third speech bubble aloud and bends down to another pupil to work with him on the questions. One of the boys asks for the meaning of the expression "*in favour*" (l. 206-207) and teacher F points him to the appropriate sentence in the information box, possibly in order to help him understand it in context. Teacher F continues reading out the speech bubbles and eliciting responses from a handful of pupils. With the sound of the bell ringing, all efforts cease at once and a group of boys rush out of the door.

## 6.4.2 Observations of the German English lessons

### Lesson G

<b>Type of school:</b> <b>School:</b>	state Gymnasium #4
<b>Teacher's name:</b> <b>Sex:</b> <b>Age:</b> <b>Qualifications:</b> <b>Teaching experience:</b> <b>Social Background:</b>	G M 45-55 1st Staatsexamen 1970, 2nd Staatsexamen 1972 25 years at the same <i>Gymnasium</i> . Studiumdirektor since 1985. German national.
<b>Class level:</b> <b>No. of pupils:</b> <b>Age:</b> <b>Materials:</b>	Grundstufe II (post beginner) 30 14-15 yrs. Black and White, Level 2 Reader, pp 24-26.
<b>Seating arrangements:</b>	The pupils sit in twos in rows of desks which are facing the blackboard. The teacher initially stands at the front, close to the first desks or sits at his own desk which is placed right against the first desk in the middle row. He later moves about the classroom to assist individual pupils with their work.

### Description of Lesson G

In the first few minutes of the lesson, teacher G initiates an informal 'warm-up' dialogue with a few of his pupils by asking them to tell him why they seem to be excited. One pupil remarks that it is because they have a visitor in their classroom, while another says it is because the break has just ended. Teacher G expresses some doubt, suggesting instead that perhaps they are in such a "hyped-up" state because they have just written a maths test, but does not insist. He then changes the topic by recounting what they have already done in the previous lesson and explaining what they will do right away and how the lesson will proceed (Appendix Q7, l. 47-58). Specifically, teacher G asks for the title of the reader they have been working on ("*Black and White*") and proceeds to briefly summarise the latest developments in the plot. He recalls the instructions he had given regarding the homework



assignment, which had to do with answering questions on the text (l. 54), and invites the class to present their homework orally, while announcing that they will be finishing off the story in this lesson.

In the course of the homework check, teacher G asks more than one pupils if they can give their answer to a particular question. Now and then he requests that pupils repeat their answers a second time, for the benefit of those who might not have heard them clearly (l. 115). Also, he asks the class if they can detect parts of answers that are amenable to "*slight alterations*" (l. 96-97). Aside from eliciting answers to the reading comprehension questions, he also occasionally opens verbal parentheses in order to provide explanations on the use of the correct tense, to occasionally ask for the meaning of an expression, or to pose a general question, thereby varying the questioning procedure (e.g. l. 106-112; 149-153; 165-170).

For the main part of the lesson, the teacher hands out photocopies of the *Black and White* story to two pupils who distribute them to the class and to the researcher. A private exchange occurs in which some pupils ask the teacher if he will bring them a stapler from the staff room to staple their new sheets to the old ones, as he has done before, but he declines by saying that he has to stay with the class (on account of the researcher being present) (l. 192-201). At the same time, while organising their papers, some pupils discover that the last page of the chapter is missing. They immediately point this out to teacher G, who acknowledges that they will have to make do without the end of the story.

The first step is to deal with new vocabulary items. Teacher G orients the pupils to the bottom of the pages where a number of new English words are given, together with their explanations in German (l. 226-231). One pupil undertakes to read the English words and teacher G asks the class to provide definitions of the words "*husband*" and "*tear*", in English (l. 241-242; 278-280). The pupils discuss these words with each other and a few venture to provide descriptions in full sentences. As soon as all the words have been read aloud, teacher G wraps up the activity and invites the class to take over the reading of the new chapter in the story (l. 307-308).



Four pupils take turns to read sections of the chapter aloud while the rest of the class follow in their copies. Each time a pupil stops reading, teacher G asks the class for their comments on their classmate's reading performance (l. 323-329; 376; 427), and then gives each reader his own feedback on their pronunciation and intonation, which he rounds off in a positive tone (e.g. l. 351; 449-450). One of the readers creates a funny incident by misreading a sentence twice, despite being corrected by his classmates (l. 491-497).

Teacher G then instructs the class to answer a set of comprehension questions on the new chapter and do an exercise in writing (l. 512-516). The questions are tackled at once. Teacher G checks that the pupils' contributions are correct in form and meaning, and helps those making mistakes or omissions to reformulate where necessary.

The class is led into the writing activity with a short prefacing comment (l. 596-603). Teacher G requests that they write down the prejudices of a secondary character as they appear in the chapter. He also takes the opportunity to elicit a newly introduced word, the word "*prejudices*" (l. 605-618), and writes it on the blackboard as the title of the writing exercise. He provides a starting sentence, but one pupil negotiates whether they can do it in a different way, to which he responds affirmatively (l. 621-623). The pupils concentrate on the task, and help each other, while teacher G walks around the room to various pupils, checking their work and answering their questions. Two minutes or so later, five pupils read out their answers to the class (l. 694-755).

Teacher G thanks everybody and one pupil in particular for bringing extra chalk, and brings the lesson to an end by briefly telling them what they will be doing next time they meet. Finally, since the winter holidays are starting in a few days, he urges the class to enjoy their holidays and not to think about school (l. 757-765).

## Lesson H

<b>Type of school:</b> <b>School:</b>	state Gymnasium #4
<b>Teacher's name:</b> <b>Sex:</b> <b>Age:</b> <b>Qualifications:</b> <b>Teaching experience:</b> <b>Social Background:</b>	H F 35-45 1st Staatsexamen 1985, 2nd Staatsexamen 1986. 8 years at the same <i>Gymnasium</i> . German national.
<b>Class level:</b> <b>No. of pupils:</b> <b>Age:</b> <b>Materials:</b>	Grundstufe II (post beginner/lower intermediate) 24 14-15 yrs. Greenboard, lyrics, tape recorder.
<b>Seating arrangements:</b>	The pupils sit in twos at desks which are set in rows facing the greenboard. The teacher initially stands at the front, close to the first desk in the middle row. She later moves about the classroom to assist individual pupils with their work.

This lesson can be broken down into three parts, namely, an oral revision of taught material, guided creative writing, and a listening activity. Although the objectives of the lesson are not explicitly presented in advance, the teacher lets the class know what they are about to do in stages. The structure of the different activities and the pace that is maintained suggest that there is a smooth progression from one part to the next.

### Description of Lesson H

Before the formal transactions of the lesson begin, the teacher (H) asks to be given back test papers that had been handed out to be corrected. Teacher and pupils engage in casual talk on various personal and classroom matters. Teacher H has a placid manner which she maintains throughout the duration of this lesson.

The first part of the lesson constitutes a revision of the contents of the previous lesson (Appendix Q8, l. 60-65). By directing a series of questions to individual

pupils, the teacher tries to elicit information on the establishment of colonies in America, how the colonists reached the American shores, what the land looked like, where different colonies were located, etc. There is some hesitation on the part of the pupils to provide answers at this stage (l. 74; 80). Perhaps it is because they know that they are expected to produce full sentences in English or because they cannot remember the details very well.

Having covered the basic facts, teacher H proceeds to connect the talk about the colonies and the past with a pre-planned writing activity, by asking the class how they think people spent their free time in the 1600s and how they do so today (l. 163-166; 175-177). After hearing a number of opinions, she informs the class that she will give them a group of words relating to modern times, which they should combine in order to create a short story (l. 191-197).

The words are written up on the greenboard and while the pupils copy them into their exercise books, teacher H reads each word out aloud and explains what it means, sometimes switching to German when she thinks it is easier to get the meaning across. The pupils start working on their stories straight away, a few on their own, most joining up with their neighbours to exchange ideas.

The teacher reminds her pupils to raise their hands if they have any questions and shortly begins to walk along the aisles looking down at pupils' books and helping individuals. About a quarter of an hour later, she interrupts the class in order to ask if some pupils could read out the beginnings of their stories (l. 272-274). Four pupils are nominated to read out their passages while the class listens quietly. They are then given a couple of minutes more to continue and finally two pupils are chosen to read out their stories in full (l. 352-380).

This procedure leads into a listening activity where all the words that were originally put up on the greenboard appear in an entirely different context. Teacher H tells the class that she will play a contemporary song for them by Sheryl Crow called "*All I wanna do*" (l. 392-429). The song is instantly identified and everyone gets excited, which makes teacher H chuckle. The class is distributed a handout with the lyrics, to follow while listening to the song and some sing along to themselves.

After the song has been played through once, the teacher asks various pupils to read it out aloud in parts. One of the pupils sees from the script that she has miss-spelt a word on the board and points the mistake out to her. Teacher H corrects the word and thanks the pupil for her observation (l. 491-497). Some time is spent concentrating on the text, where pupils volunteer to say which word or expression is not clear to them (for example, l. 515 "*suits*"; l. 524 "*(beer) buzz*"; l. 544 "*labels*") and the teacher provides explanations in English and in German.

By this time it is near the end of the lesson, the pupils become restless, some turn their attention to each other, some let out short shrieks, giggle and move about. Teacher H notices their unrest and brings the lesson to a close by saying that they will talk more about the song in their next lesson, after their return from their school trip (l. 578-587). No homework is allocated. Someone asks about the interviews with the researcher, and although officially the lesson is over, teacher H responds in English.

## Lesson I

<b>Type of school:</b> <b>School:</b>	state Realschule #5
<b>Teacher's name:</b> <b>Sex:</b> <b>Age:</b> <b>Qualifications:</b> <b>Teaching experience:</b> <b>Social Background:</b>	I F 35-45 1st Staatsexamen 1972, 2nd Staatsexamen 1974. 21 years: 5 years at a <i>Realschule</i> , 5 years at a private language school in Nice, 2 years at a Community college, Arizona USA. German national.
<b>Class level:</b> <b>No. of pupils:</b> <b>Age:</b> <b>Materials:</b>	Grundstufe I (beginner) 26 14-15 yrs. Red Line 4, [When the White Men came], p 88.
<b>Seating arrangements:</b>	The pupils sit in rows of desks facing the blackboard, except for one desk that is placed perpendicular to the blackboard. The teacher initially stands at the front and later sits on her own desk which is placed against the first desk of the middle row.

This lesson can be divided into two main parts, both of which were devoted to oral work. The first part consists of an oral revision of taught material on American history while the second part involves the reading of extracts from the textbook. The texts are treated as a reading activity and are followed by questions aiming to check comprehension and to create opportunities for the pupils to give their opinions in relation to the contents.

### Description of Lesson I

Upon entering the classroom, teacher (I) strides to the middle of the room and, using arm gestures, summons the class to stand up. She greets the class "*good morning*", they greet her back and everyone sits down again. The first couple of minutes are spent discussing when the teacher will return a recently written class test. She suggests a certain day, while some pupils propose various other days and a change in

the weekly schedule is brought up, but the subject is brought to a close without too much discussion (Appendix Q9, l. 21-45).

Teacher I begins with the lesson by inviting the class to recall and repeat some things they had done already on American history (l. 47-49). She nominates a couple of pupils and elicits factual information. This question-answer routine is interrupted as she notices that some pupils are not sitting in their usual places (l. 59-60). Teacher I insists that everyone returns to their normal seats, while a few pupils remonstrate that they wanted to help a classmate and that they wanted to free a desk for the visitor. An argument develops in German (l. 65-91). The teacher ignores the pupils' remonstrations and raises her voice, compelling them to move back to their normal places. Once everyone is seated again, teacher I explains that this change had to be made because she hasn't got her glasses with her and cannot see them sharply enough (l. 123-126).

The lesson continues with the revision on the history of the colonists and the American Indians. With leading questions the pupils are prompted to recall what they have read about the gold rush, the "*Trail of Tears*", the Cherokee Indians, and what damage was caused by the white settlers (e.g. l. 144-147; 182-183). The teacher praises those who remember the facts, and complains about those who do not raise their hands (l. 158-172; 210). She continues to elicit information about the different conditions under which the Indians suffered and died. She elaborates and expands on the pupils' answers, prompting them to remember what they have been taught. Up to this point, exchanges between teacher and pupils are conducted in English, with the exception of the seating episode and the occasional personal comments directed to pupils.

An interruption occurs as two latecomers come in. Teacher I looks around for other absentees and jests that with the class trip approaching, everyone is in the best of health (l. 336-339). Next, she informs the class that she would like them to look at a new text in the book but temporarily suspends this activity by eliciting information from the pupils about a historical character (General Custer), whose name is



connected with the new text. Subsequently, she retells the story of this man's role in the battles that were fought against the Indians and how this story has been made into a film (l. 360-407).

Teacher I refers the class to their textbooks and asks them to read a passage where the words of an Indian chief are quoted (l. 419-422), comparing the different views of Indians and whites towards their natural environment. A pupil volunteers to read the passage aloud. The teacher then poses a number of comprehension questions to the class and asks whether they think the Indian chief's words are still true today and in which ways the earth is harmed (e.g. l. 458-467; 481-482; 502-503; 541-543). These questions bring about a shift in the topic to the environmental problems people create. At this point however, teacher I criticises the class for their idleness:

\*T-I: well, I mean, I've seen you sleep but today it's really absolute horror.  
when I see how you droop around[!].  
you draw the whole time, you don't participate, what's the matter, heavenly God[!]?  
[translated extract , l. 506-513]

The pupils reply that it was Parent's Evening the previous day and that they are tired. She remarks that they are too lazy to speak although she knows they are capable of doing so (l. 533-536). She repeats her question about how people treat the earth and this time a number of pupils reply with examples, after being prompted by the teacher with further clues. Some mention that we pollute the earth with the cars, we burn the forests and take more than we need from it. After seven pupils have had a turn to say something on this topic, teacher I returns to her question about the Indian chief's words and concludes that *"the old Indian is right when he says that the white man takes the earth as if it belonged to him"* (l. 603-605).

She then finds that they have to rush into reading the new text since their time is running out (l. 613). Three pupils take turns to read a section each out loud. As the pupils read the teacher corrects their pronunciation errors while the rest of the class follow in their books. At the end of this, teacher I asks the class for the words they do not know and explains their meanings (e.g. l. 690-756).

As a follow-up activity, the pupils are asked to recite what the text is about in their own words, i.e. what happened at Little Big Horn, what the white settlers did there. Certain pupils bid for a turn by clicking their fingers but teacher I nominates a pupil who has not raised his hand. He replies that he has no idea (l. 787-793). At this point, teacher I announces that she does not intend to go on with the lesson because the pupils are not participating. Instead, she allocates homework for the next lesson (i.e. the next day): everyone is to copy the whole of page 88 in their exercise books (l. 805-808). A couple of pupils attempt to speak up for themselves and the teacher points to those whom she considers to have participated. More pupils protest that they too were participating until finally the teacher declares that the 'homework' must be done by the whole class (l. 815-842). Additionally, she tells the class that all the new vocabulary must be learnt off-by-heart for a written test, stressing that they will be questioned on everything, on the text and the vocabulary (l. 865-868; 892-897). She seems to be very exasperated, exclaiming that it was the most tiresome and stupid lesson that she had ever experienced in her whole career (l. 870-878).

The pupils start talking animatedly with each other, repeating what they have been told to do, asking questions, exclaiming. The teacher puts her papers away, shuts her briefcase and leaves the classroom (l. 961-962). Some pupils react by shrieking; the classroom becomes very noisy. Half a minute later the bell rings for the break.

## Lesson J

<b>Type of school:</b> <b>School:</b>	state Realschule #5
<b>Teacher's name:</b> <b>Sex:</b> <b>Age:</b> <b>Qualifications:</b> <b>Teaching experience:</b> <b>Social Background:</b>	J F 35-45 1st Staatsexamen 1973, 2nd Staatsexamen 1974. 20 years at the same school. German national.
<b>Class level:</b> <b>No. of pupils:</b> <b>Age:</b> <b>Materials:</b>	Grundstufe II (post beginner/lower intermediate) 25 14-15 yrs. Red Line 4, p 59, plus use of the greenboard.
<b>Seating arrangements:</b>	The pupils sit in twos at desks which are set in rows facing the greenboard. The teacher initially stands at the front, close to the first desk in the middle row. During the course of the lesson she sits on the desk and gets down only at the end of the lesson to go to the back of the room in order to speak to the researcher.

This is an example of a lesson whose original plan was changed on the spot because of the need to deal with pressing administrative matters. The problem is that the class has to write a dictation test within a week but they are also writing tests on other subjects in that same period of time. The only possibility open to them is to prepare for the test on this day and take the test two days later during the Music period. Thus, although the teacher's original intention was to practice the passive voice with the class, they end up doing a dictation practice in preparation for the dictation test.

### Description of Lesson J

The classroom is almost twice the size of the other classrooms I have visited. A number of pupils rush to take places at the back and promptly teacher J instructs them to come closer to the front so that she will not have to shout. There is a lot of commotion, scraping of chairs and pushing of desks, and it takes a few minutes

before the class stands up for the "*good morning*" greeting that marks the start of the lesson (Appendix Q10, l. 68-69).

First, teacher J reminds the class of the interviews that are scheduled to take place at the end of the hour, and confirms that the same people whom she named last time will be interviewed in twos. She then requests that they quickly set a date for their test in English which, she explains, is going to be a dictation test (l. 107-108; 115-116).

This request opens up a long discussion, as the pupils object to the dates proposed by their teacher because they already have tests to write on other subjects. Some protest that they need to be informed one week in advance about writing a test (l. 136-137), while teacher J declares that the following week will be too late because she must hand in the grades sooner than that. She asks the class for suggestions and they come up with various days of the week except Friday (l. 151-160), some propose that they do not write a test at all and others recite the exam regulations in defence of being overloaded. After looking at the class timetable, teacher J states that the only possibility would be to ask another teacher to take over her Music lesson on the coming Thursday so that she could give them the dictation test (l. 264-287).

Someone continues to protest that the test has to be announced one week in advance and the discussion flares up again with various pupils shouting out their views and preferences. Then one pupil loudly agrees to the teacher's suggestion of writing the dictation on Thursday and the teacher winds up the issue by saying that she will try to get her colleague to co-operate in putting this idea into effect (l. 327-350). She then points out that, as a consequence of this arrangement, the day's lesson plan must change and instead of doing the passive voice as intended, they will do a practice dictation, so that they have a day in between practising and writing the test (l. 360-365).

Subsequently, she asks the class to take out their notebooks while she writes up a set of proper nouns on the greenboard for the pupils to copy for the dictation. She then

reads out the whole passage once and gives the page number in the book where it can be found (l. 441-475). She states that it is permitted to check in the book during this practice but that it would be better to write without looking.

Teacher J sits on the desk and begins dictating the text sentence by sentence. She reads each sentence once fully, then repeats it in short chunks, then reads it all out again before moving on to the next one. The pupils repeat bits of sentences after her, ask her to repeat some parts again, ask for clarifications, indicate misunderstanding and engage in small talk. Thus, on many occasions, words and phrases are reiterated a number of times. At the end of the final sentence, teacher J instructs the pupils to take a few minutes to correct their own work (l. 736-743; 764-767). She then turns to the greenboard where she writes down a sentence which she deliberately changed in the dictation. Someone asks her how to treat a word when one letter is missing. She replies that it should be taken as a mistake while another pupil shouts out that it should be taken as half a mistake only. The pupils get down to checking their work and chatting.

Teacher J walks to the back of the classroom where the researcher is sitting and apologises for the dictation, saying that the class asked for it and that because it is only permitted to write one test a day, she had to change her program to accommodate the forthcoming test (l. 780). The researcher asks her whether the pupils benefit by writing a trial dictation test and teacher J replies that it is only a chance for them to improve their overall grade in English and to give them the feeling that they can do something that is easy for them (l. 784; 802-805). She stresses that they do other kinds of tests as well and then brings a sample of an older test paper to show the researcher how it is structured and what kinds of grammar questions it contains. Finally, she turns to the class to announce the commencement of the interviews in the next hour and a few seconds later the bell rings for the break.

## Lesson K

<b>Type of school:</b> <b>School:</b>	state Haupt-Realschule #6
<b>Teacher's name:</b> <b>Sex:</b> <b>Age:</b> <b>Qualifications:</b> <b>Teaching experience:</b> <b>Social Background:</b>	K F 25-35 1st Staatsexamen 1986, 2nd Staatsexamen 1988. 6 years at a <i>Haupt-Realschule</i> in Berlin German national.
<b>Class level:</b> <b>No. of pupils:</b> <b>Age:</b> <b>Materials:</b>	Grundstufe I (beginners) 25 14-15 yrs. English H- Neue Ausgabe, Unit 4, section e. English H Workbook, page 29.
<b>Seating arrangements:</b>	The pupils sit in groups of two to four, in different parts of the room. The teacher initially stands at the front, close to her desk but in the course of the lesson she walks around the room to help the pupils with their exercises.

In this lesson, the class is led through different kinds of oral work which concentrate mainly on the build-up and use of vocabulary. First, a gap-filling exercise is carried out, where the focus is on completing a given paragraph by choosing the appropriate vocabulary items for each sentence. Parallel to this, each sentence in this exercise is translated into German. Subsequently, the pupils are instructed to do an exercise from the textbook in which a "*question and answer*" sequence must be used to elicit the names of different places, i.e. nouns, from the pupils. This exercise is then linked to the task of writing original sentences by using the grammatical form presented in the previous exercise (without any teaching of rules) and presenting them as questions to the class. This is part of a double lesson lasting 90 minutes. The first half of the lesson is covered here.

### Description of Lesson K

Teacher K and I walk into the classroom together, I make my way to a set of empty desks at the side of the room from where I have a full view of the whole room. While



I discreetly set up my recording equipment the teacher greets the class "*good morning*" (Appendix Q11, l. 20-21). As the pupils noisily arrange themselves into groups and choose desks, she singles out three boys and allocates specific places to them, determining who should sit alone and who can sit with a classmate (l. 30-35). She takes the roll call (l. 41-88) and after she has checked who is present and who not, she hands back old homework papers to individual pupils and collects new ones (l. 94-120).

The teacher begins the lesson by announcing that they are first going to go through an exercise from the Workbook that had been given as homework (l. 117-120). It is a gap-filling exercise based on a semi-authentic advertisement and intended for the consolidation of vocabulary items that appear in the text. Teacher K checks to see who has not done the homework and five pupils raise their hands. In response, she cautions the class that their work will start counting towards their grades for the next term (l. 150-156). She then seeks a volunteer to start with the exercise by reading the first sentence. While the pupil is reading, the teacher interrupts her to correct her pronunciation and creates a break in the activity in order to discipline a pupil who doesn't have a book in front of him and another who is talking with his classmate. After the pupil has read out the sentence and supplied the missing word correctly, the teacher nominates another pupil to provide a translation of the whole sentence in German (see the sequence l. 184; 193; 215-216; 223). This occurs repeatedly: after each sentence is fully and correctly rendered, a translation of it is elicited before moving on to the next sentence. Teacher K closely monitors all pupils' efforts at reading and translating with frequent prompts and corrections. At the end of this exercise, she allocates the next two exercises in the workbook as homework for those who would like to do them at home (l. 388-399).

The class is then oriented to the textbook where they continue with a vocabulary exercise. This exercise is structured around the question "*what do you call a place where...?*" and provides different endings for which the pupils have to find the correct noun that fits the description of the question (l. 410-413). For this exercise, different pupils take turns to read a question and find the correct answer. Once all the

questions have been covered, teacher K introduces a supplementary activity (l. 515-524). She brings out a set of cards with questions written on one side and the correct answers written at the back. One pupil is given a card and, following the teacher's instructions, reads out the question without looking at the back. S/he then nominates another classmate to give the answer and the one who finds the correct answer gets a turn to read out the next question, and so on (e.g. l. 581-592).

The pupils are then set the task of making up their own questions which they should then put to the class. The teacher instructs them to write down one question and gives them three minutes time in which to think about it and formulate it. She models a question herself and elicits the correct answer (l. 645-654; 676-688). Then she approaches the desks and moves about from one group to another, helping and guiding individual pupils. One of the boys asks the researcher for a word in English.

When the time is up, the teacher calls for everybody's attention and repeats what the pupils have to do, stressing that they must make sure to give everyone a turn. One of the girls volunteers to start and reads out her own question (l. 753). Teacher K mediates and gets her to choose a classmate. The chosen pupil answers correctly and he then puts a question to the class which is quite difficult (l. 763-766). Teacher K asks him to read out his question a second time. The boy misunderstands her instruction and gives the answer instead (l. 790-792). Everyone laughs at this blunder and the teacher asks him to choose the next person. The activity continues until there are no more volunteers.

Teacher K orients the class to another exercise in the textbook, where the pupils take turns to read out a set of words and choose the odd one out (l. 959). Finally, the teacher draws everyone's attention to her and reports the end of term grades to the class, together with her comments on each pupil's performance.

## **6.5 Summary**

The chapter began with an exposition of contextual variables surrounding and affecting the classroom environment, namely the school features, and teacher and pupil characteristics. The end of each section was supplemented with an outline of the general findings. This was followed by a detailed description of each of the lessons observed, as a means of approaching the reality of classroom life and documenting the actual process of teaching.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN: Results of the analysis and discussion**

This chapter presents the trends, similarities and differences that emerged from the analysis of the 11 lessons and the 95 interviews. The classroom situation is examined from a variety of perspectives with the research questions as reference points, following a partly qualitative (holistic) and partly quantitative analysis. Various aspects of the lesson content and specific lesson features are highlighted, following a sequence from the general to the specific. The features analysed include: classroom climate and management strategies, role-relationships, classroom activities, interaction patterns, the focus of verbal interaction, the use of the target language, teachers' questioning practices, and pupil participation. In probing into the different facets of the life of the classrooms, a conscious effort was made to maintain a neutral standpoint and, where appropriate, to complement the analysis with references to the points of view of the participants (teachers and pupils). The research findings are subsequently checked against the criteria for the evaluation of English language lessons in Greek state schools, as exemplified in Chapter Five, §5.4.1. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the findings, focusing on a constellation of factors that have affected ELT in Greek state schools and education as a whole.

The classes and lessons are identified by the same letter used to designate the teachers who taught them, for example: teacher/class/lesson A, teacher/class/lesson B, etc. The complete set of transcripts and the teaching material which correspond to the lesson descriptions can be found in Appendix Q.

### **7.1 Classroom climate**

The classroom climate is decisive on the extent to which a class is cohesive, co-operative and motivated (Balson, 1984). It reflects the social relationships of the members of a class and reveals how these relationships affect the developments in the classroom. It permeates everything that is done in the classroom and is, in turn, influenced by much of what happens there (Allwright, 1984). The classroom climate

is given particular consideration in this study (research question no. 4, §5.3.2) because it reveals the tone in which the observed lessons were accomplished and is taken as *"a reflection of the indicators of quality of instruction"* (Creemers, 1994: 120).

### The Greek English lessons

My observations of the lessons led me to the conclusion that the atmosphere in the Greek classrooms was frequently marked by boredom and/or restlessness, miscommunication and interruptions. To illustrate, two short incidents are recounted here:

- \*T-A: well, uh ## yes.  
[%T-A addresses the class]  
so what do you think about  
GEO's opinion, hm?  
[%silence].  
did you listen?
- \*M-P: οχι! [%laughter] no!
- \*T-A: why?  
[%pupils chatter and T-A  
raises her voice]
- \*T-A: καλα δεν μου λετε ρε παιδια,  
τοση ωρα διαβαζε,  
το δικο σας το μυαλο  
που ητανε[!]?  
(App. Q1, l. 434-447) allright, why don't you tell me you guys, all  
this time she was reading, where was your  
mind!?
- \*T-C: sss!  
ελα να διαβασουμε!  
sss! [%raps pen on desk].  
sss!  
ελα μπροστα σου!  
δε κοιτανε (περα).  
sss! come let's read!  
come, in front of you.  
they [=people] don't look over there.
- \*SOF: [%reads] one evening  
xxx was sitting+...
- \*T-C: sss! MAR γυρνα μπροστα σου! MAR turn to the front of you!  
(App. Q3, l. 334-349)

Humour was absent from the Greek English lessons, all teachers were serious and maintained a physical and psychological distance between themselves and their pupils. In the very few instances in which laughter was registered, a closer examination of the context revealed that it was pupils laughing mockingly at

someone's expense, as was the case in lesson A where some pupils 'teeheed' at something a classmate said or something the teacher had done.

On the teachers' agendas the central motto seemed to be: "*first discipline, then teaching*" (Appel, 1995: 11), as control was inherent in the classroom proceedings, both in determining pupils' output and checking social behaviour. This may be seen as a reaction to the uncertainty and unpredictability of their teaching situation: when asked to comment on what they thought about the classroom atmosphere, all teachers pointed out that it is usually influenced by numerous factors that are difficult to manipulate (including the teachers' own mood, the time of day, the weather, external noise, the material in the book), without omitting to highlight the significant role that the pupils themselves play in the classroom climate, i.e. whether they show an interest in the topics/activities at hand, whether they have prepared themselves (teacher C), whether they are willing to participate (teacher A).

Some of the teachers expressed their views about the climate in their classroom frankly and realistically. Teachers B and E for example, shared a bleak view of the climate in their classrooms, accentuating the problems of group management and lack of *engagement*:

"The classroom climate is not a positive one by any means. The way we work as a group is not satisfactory...[there are] constant discipline problems, there's a great deal of apathy and callousness from the pupils, they ignore you entirely provokingly. The general attitude is that the English lesson is the hour of relaxation" (teacher B).

"The pupils aren't negative towards me personally, the problem is that they are indifferent towards English at school...they are bored... those who have difficulties with the language create problems in class. There's a problem of co-operation. I am not satisfied with the way we work as a group" (teacher E).

On the contrary, teacher D seemed pleased with the state of affairs in her classroom, although her use of the expression "*super-human*" suggests that her efforts to maintain a pleasant climate and avoid inducing boredom somehow exceeded the limits of her psychological strength:



"the climate is pleasant I could say, we don't have particular problems. The climate is pleasant in this class because I make a super-human effort... even if I don't feel well, I don't show it to the pupils. I will always enter with a smile... I try as much as I can to avoid making the pupils bored."

Other teachers (C, F) sought to neutralise the impact of their statements about the classroom climate. Teacher F was certainly looking at things from the pupils' point of view when she said, after a long pause, that *"the classroom climate is positive. The factor that contributes to this is my patience"*. She spoke for herself at other moments during our more private conversations, where she revealed that being in the lesson was a frustrating and stressful experience.

The pupils who were interviewed were asked to refer to the terms they used among themselves to describe the English lesson. After some moments of hesitation they responded with expressions like *"chaos"*, *"noisy"* (class A), *"boring"*, *"the time to sleep"* (classes B, C, D), *"dull"*, (class D), *"tense"*, *"chaotic"* (class E), *"uninteresting"*, *"pleasant but wild"* (class F). There was a consensus of opinion that the classroom climate was not conducive to the learning of English.

Further, out of the 48 interviewees, only 3 stated explicitly that they thought it's a good thing to study English at school, while 4 refrained from giving an answer. Some of the pupils who claimed to know more than what was being practised or taught in class felt bored, while others who felt unable to cope with the demands of the lesson said that they simply withdrew from participating. The pupils definitely played a part in 'shaping' the classroom climate through their own behaviour: they chose to 'misbehave' and focused primarily on establishing solidarity and recognition within their group. Their unruly behaviour thus reflected not an opposition to authority but an endeavour to counteract boredom and their unwillingness or incapacity to become actively involved in the lesson.

In the Greek classes there were clear signs of an absence of rapport and lack of collaboration. The teachers projected themselves either as 'victims' (e.g. teacher F) or 'lion tamers' (e.g. teachers B, C) and the pupils were envisaged as 'little rebels'. The teachers themselves stated that what they rarely find in their classes is *"the pupil who*

*participates ... (who raises his/her hand), who co-operates, or [is] at least paying attention"* (Teachers E and F, App. C).

### **The German English lessons**

With respect to the German English language lessons, four of the five teachers saw the classroom climate in a positive light. The efforts of teachers G and H to make the lessons interesting and to involve the pupils seems to have had a satisfactory impact. Teacher G stated that in his classroom,

"the climate is warm rather than cold... I don't think that they are afraid in the classroom or that they feel suppressed. I think that they are prepared to react quite openly and freely. ... There is a certain distance but I don't think they are afraid to come up with questions..." (App. C).

Likewise, Teachers J and K made a positive comment:

"It's a class which I like. Sometimes they are a bit noisy but it's not really negative. I think they like me too. I would say it is a friendly climate" (teacher J).

"The climate is very good, I don't think they have problems, they are relaxed, they can speak with each other and with me. I would call it a friendly climate" (teacher K).

From their side, the German pupils described the classroom climate as being *"good"*, *"friendly"* (G's lesson) and *"nice"* (H's lesson). From a total of 32 responses, 20 were explicitly positive. Specifically, out of the 12 interviewees from classes G and H, only 2 were not happy with the climate in the classroom. Among the rest there was an agreement that the classroom climate was pleasant and relaxing. Similarly, 6 out of the 8 pupils interviewed in class J stated that the relationship between the pupils as well as between the teacher and the class was *"very good"*, that the climate was *"friendly"*, and there were *"no complaints"*. All 4 interviewees from class K reported that they have a *"good"* and *"friendly"* classroom atmosphere. However, the pupils in class I expressed lukewarm attitudes. They managed to show discontent with the pace and structure of the lesson procedure, which led to a confrontation and a breakdown of the lesson.

As it appears, the German teachers felt confident that the psychological climate in their classes was good, and this was confirmed by the majority of the pupils' who described the climate as relaxed, confiding and friendly. This indicated a positive cohesiveness within the group as well as between teacher and pupils, stability, and a mutual expectation that the two parties take their teaching and learning responsibilities seriously.

Thus, while in 5 of the 6 Greek classrooms, the socio-emotional atmosphere worked against the teaching-learning process, in 4 of the 5 German classrooms it facilitated the lesson procedure. In the sections that follow, a closer look will be taken at various features of classroom interaction which in themselves are interesting and revealing, but also explain how the classroom atmosphere developed the way it did and how it was reinforced.

#### **7.1.1 Classroom management**

As classroom management techniques were a rather prominent feature of classroom interaction and seemed to affect the classroom climate (in the Greek English lessons especially), it was decided that it would be useful to examine them more closely. Particular attention was paid to the kinds of control techniques employed, and the reprimands and praise given by the teachers. The comparison of the Greek and German lessons at this level is taken as a rough approximation, because the kinds of management strategies employed by the teachers depended to some extent on the types of activity carried out and therefore gave rise to different frequencies of praise and reprimand. Nevertheless, it is a useful indication of what teacher and pupil behaviour was like.

Any explicit negative evaluation of pupil behaviour, delivered in a severe tone and tending to be extended in length was identified as a reprimand. Praise was expressed as a single or extended utterance carrying an explicit, positive evaluation of what the pupil said or did, going beyond the acknowledgement of the

correctness/appropriateness of his/her response (after Altani, 1992: 377-8), for example:

\*T-B: thank you.  
that was very good reading.  
okay.  
(App. Q2, l. 221-223)

### The Greek lessons

Despite being aware that discipline and order were called for, the pupils in the Greek classrooms were frequently and repeatedly disorderly and inattentive. Numerous incidents were recorded in which the teachers communicated dissatisfaction, annoyance, even anger with what the pupils were or were *not* doing through verbal and non-verbal discipline statements. In order to deal with the pupils' disruptive behaviour (which included making noise, chatting, being restless, or passive), the Greek teachers consistently employed a combination of control techniques involving the following:

- shushing the class emphatically.
- clapping hands or hitting a desk surface.
- raising their voice, shouting at pupils.
- reprimanding a pupil directly.

Specifically, teacher A often had to raise her voice or clap her hands together for attention or silence as her class was rather inert and inattentive. She also made numerous personal reprimands to individual pupils, as in the following instance:

*T-A: ΓΕΡ, αμαν βρε, αφου το ξερεις οτι δεν μπορεί ν' αφησει τα ποδια του χωρις να τα κουναι, τι θα γινει?	GER, gosh man, you know he can't leave his feet without swinging them, what's to be done?
*M-P: κυρια, κυρια!	miss! miss!
*T-A: μα με τα ποδια του ΠΑΝ θ' ασχολεισαι ολη τη χρονια? [%laughter]	but are you going to preoccupy yourself with PAN's feet the whole year?

(App. Q1, l. 1052-1058)

In teacher B's class, background chatter was particularly audible at the start and at the end of the lesson. Teacher B sharply ordered the pupils to behave properly (for

example to raise hands instead of shouting out) and was quick to lose her temper and reprimand individual pupils who were doing the wrong thing:

- \*T-B:   γιατι μασας τσιχλα,  
          τι να κανω εγω τωρα μετα απ αυτη  
          την ιστορια με τις τσιχλες!  
          μα δε ντρεπεσαι λιγακι παιδι μου?  
          ποσες φορες[!] πρεπει να το πω πια!  
          τι να σου πω δηλαδη τι να σου πω!  
          αναισθησια μονο αυτη τη λεξη!  
          με συγχωρεις παρα πολυ,  
          τελικα δεν καταλαβαινετε  
          αλλη γλωσσα!  
          λοιπον, τι λεγαμε+/. σιωπη!  
          να μη σε ξαναδω θα παρεις  
          τιμωρια, στο λεω!  
          [%T-B hits pen on desk surface].  
(App. Q2, l. 610-628)
- why are you chewing gum,  
          what should I do now after that  
          story with the chewing gums!  
          but aren't you ashamed a little, child?  
          how many[!] times must I say it!  
          what should I say to you,  
          what should I say to you!  
          callousness, only this word!  
          I'm very sorry, finally you don't  
          understand any other language!  
          so, what were we saying, silence!  
          don't let me see you again you'll be punished,  
          I'm telling you!

The pupils in teacher C's class were on the whole very agitated. As a result, she repeatedly had to interrupt the lesson procedure (no less than 55 times in 30 minutes) to shush the class or to get a pupil to sit still:

- \*T-C:   xxx εσυ ελα κατσε (εδω μπροστα).  
          με τα ρουχα σου τρωγεσαι,  
          κατσε κατω!  
          τελειωνε! [%laughter]  
(App. Q3, l. 875-881)
- xxx you come and sit (here in front).  
          you're fidgety with your own clothes,  
          sit down! get done with it!

Teacher D's class was generally attentive but there were pupils who became distracted and began chatting to each other or doing other things like staring out of the window, possibly because their concentration span was diminishing or the interest in the classroom proceedings was waning. Teacher D was alert not to let the noise escalate so she reproached individual pupils directly or shushed them (e.g. App. Q4, l. 249-251). Teacher E's class did not 'misbehave'. They had already been given a dressing down by the head for playing water fights during the break, and some pupils had been sent out, so the rest were behaving quite soberly as a result. However, teacher E discouraged attempts at chatter by shushing the class at the start of the lesson and keeping an unequivocally stern expression on her face thereafter. In contrast, teacher F's class was the rowdiest and most uncontrollable of all (see

description of lesson F, §6.4.1). The teacher neutralised the problem by going ahead with the lesson and selecting individual pupils to respond to her questions and instructions. The few attempts that teacher F made to get the pupils' attention involved clapping her hands together and touching individual pupils on their shoulders.

A possible cause for the management problems and the difficulty the Greek teachers had in establishing a reasonable working atmosphere could well be the fact that the lesson plans were based solely and directly on the textbook and were thus predictable, uninspiring and devoid of preparation (Quina, 1989). Also, the teachers' tendency to initiate and control all classroom action, restricting pupil behaviour to routinised interaction patterns could further explain the pupils' boredom and the lapse to unruly behaviour. Further, it could also be presumed that as the lessons proceeded at a routine pace aimed at 'middle' pupils to the neglect of the needs of the others, it was hard to build group cohesion and a good working atmosphere with mixed-ability classes, as the pace of instruction was too easy for some and too difficult for others. On the other hand, individual seatwork was difficult to monitor effectively and teachers were unable to attend to the individual needs of pupils who may have required extra help. No less influential were the participants' negative attitudes towards their lessons (mentioned in Chapter Six, §6.2 and §6.3) and the lack of pupil motivation with regard to their learning situation.

### **The German lessons**

Control techniques employed by the German teachers included:

- temperately shushing the class.
- using calming hand gestures.
- reprimanding a pupil/the class directly.

Disturbances and chatter in the German classrooms did not seem to be taken as an instant threat, in many cases they tended to be ignored. As teacher G explained, *"it sometimes gets noisy and I would like them to be a bit more quiet but this does not*



*last very long and sometimes noise is very productive too"* (App. C). Moreover, when the disruptive incidents did persist, they were handled directly but in a less offhand manner. For example, teacher G checked pupils who began chatting non-verbally, by stretching out his arm or placing his finger on his lips and by shushing them in a low or whispering tone:

\*T-G: just a moment+...  
 [%he stretches his arm out in a  
 calming gesture].  
 we are waiting for those two  
 gentlemen over there+...  
 [%whispers] sss.  
 (App. Q7, l. 585-588)

The fewest explicit discipline statements were made in lesson H, as background chatter or disruption did not escalate. Teacher J also employed calming hand gestures and a subdued tone of voice to regain her pupils' attention, in a way similar to the following example:

*T-H:	and INA+...	
*INA:	was ist mit mir?	what about me?
	[%teacher extends both hands in a calming gesture].	
*T-H:	be quiet and try to listen.	

(App. Q8, l. 356-360)

In class J there was loud, spontaneous talk occurring simultaneously or parallel to the main teacher-pupil exchanges. However, teacher J displayed flexibility in her treatment of such pupil behaviour. She occasionally, checked disruptive behaviour directly but she largely ignored pupil-pupil interaction (both on and off-task) when it occurred. Teacher I made a great effort to encourage the pupils to participate in her lesson, but as a result of the constant 'replay' of the question-answer routine, the class became steadily unresponsive. Her prompting gradually took on more 'aggressive' tones and was gradually transformed into sharp reprimands:

T-I:

also, ich meine  
ich hab Euch ja oft schon schlafen erlebt  
aber heute ist es wirklich, also absoluter Horror.  
wenn ich schon seh wie ihr alle rumhaengt[!].  
du malst die ganze Stunde,  
du machst nicht mit,  
was ist denn los, Himmel Herr Gott!  
(App. Q9, l. 506-513)

well, I mean,  
I've often seen you sleep  
but today it's, really, absolute horror.  
when I see how you droop around[!].  
you draw the whole time,  
you don't participate,  
what's the matter, heavenly god!

The majority of reprimands were made by teacher K, whose class was described as one with difficult, slow pupils having a low concentration span. The focus of her reprimands was on noise and chatting. It is worth noting however, that she did not react to movement out of the chairs or turning around, and her reprimands were made in a normal, steady tone of voice:

\*T-K:

der Unterricht hat angefangen  
MAR, wenn ich die Anwesenheit  
kontrolliere.  
(l. 71-72)  
(and later:)  
\*T-K: quatscht mal nicht mehr da.  
(App. Q11, l. 942-943)

the lesson has started MAR,  
when I check who is present.  
  
  
  
  
  
don't talk any more over there.

A quantitative representation showing the frequency of reprimands and praise made by the individual teachers in both Greek and German classes appears below, together with an account of the findings:

Table 9: Distribution of instances of praise and reprimands in the Greek and German EFL classes\*

Greek Teachers

	A	B	C	D	E	F	Total
Reprimands	13	13	17	03	03	--	49
Praise	03	16	--	03	--	--	22

German teachers

	G	H	I	J	K	Total
Reprimands	04	01	08	06	11	30
Praise	04	06	03	--	04	19

\*The duration of all transcribed lessons was approximately 45 minutes.

At first glance, we see that three out of the six Greek teachers (50%) and four out of the five German teachers (80%) employed a combination of praise and reprimands. The main observation arising from the above figures is that discipline episodes generated a greater number of reprimands from the teachers in the Greek lessons, while praise-giving statements or expressions of approval were less prevalent (with the exception of teacher B who praised and reprimanded her pupils many times but whose praise was slightly more forthcoming, and teacher F who offered neither praise nor reprimands as she strove to steer the course of activities and tone down the tremendous commotion going on). The transcripts show that the Greek teachers' reprimands were more extended than praise and often severe, pertaining to the pupils' lack of attentiveness and/or readiness to participate as well as their performance or the content of their answers, for example:

- |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                               |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>*T-D: και μη μιλαμε τοσο πολυ!<br/>τι εγινε?</p> <p>*M-X: κυρια μια κολλα (ζητησα).</p> <p>*T-D: one minute only.<br/>[%T-D reprimands a pupil].<br/>μ' αυτη τη (δουλεια) καθε μερα.<br/>αντε!<br/>στο πισω θρανιο.</p> <p>(App. Q4, l. 121-134)</p> | <p>and let's not talk so much!<br/>what's happened?</p> <p>miss, (I asked for) a piece of paper xxx.</p> <p>with this (business) every day!<br/>go!<br/>to the back desk!</p> |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

The majority of such instances were identified as "management" reprimands (Altani, 1992: 378), as the teachers' criticism was directed against what they perceived as the inappropriateness of the pupils' general demeanour and/or violation of the classroom rules. Here is another example:

- |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>*T-B: δε μουτζουρωνουμε,<br/>γραφουμε στο vocabulary<br/>αυτο που ειπαμε!<br/>τεσσερεις τεραρτου ενενηντα<br/>τεσσερα, "constant", "permanent",<br/>και οτι αλλο, γραφουμε!</p> <p>(App. Q2, l. 387-395)<br/>(and later on:)</p> <p>μη μιλατε μεταξυ σας!<br/>εκτος του οτι δεν ειναι απαραιτητο,<br/>ειναι πολυ ενοχλητικο.</p> <p>(App. Q2, l. 535-538)</p> | <p>we don't scribble,<br/>we write in the vocabulary<br/>what we said!<br/>fourth of the fourth nineteen ninety four,<br/>"constant", "permanent",<br/>and whatever else, we write!</p> <p>don't talk amongst yourselves!<br/>apart from it not being necessary,<br/>it's very disturbing.</p> |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

The praise offered by the teachers consisted of short phrases or expressions, like *"very good"* (teacher A, App. Q1, l. 964), *"good"*, *"bravo"* (teacher D, App. Q4, l. 314-315 and 389), and very rarely extended to longer sentences. In this way, the teachers showed approval towards individual pupils for paying attention to the task or their questions, and following them through. In other words, they communicated a recognition of the pupils' 'academic' performance (Altani, 1992).

The German teachers were just as alert towards their pupils' conduct as their Greek colleagues, and while they initially tended to ignore disruptions, they were also firm in making discipline statements when the need arose. For teacher J, one of the sharp edges of classroom life is having to deal with classes of thirty or so pupils *"because they are so hard to control. Discipline is really difficult... and it's not getting better, it has been getting worse in the last few years"*. The analysis shows, however, that their criticisms were generally less face threatening (except those of teacher I), they were delivered in a matter-of-fact manner, free from recrimination and were less extensive than those of their Greek colleagues. Moreover, although direct verbal statements of praise were slightly fewer than those made by the Greek teachers, positive reinforcement of pupils' behaviour was conveyed through paralinguistic behaviour, as in classes G, H, and K where some exchanges between the teacher and pupils were punctuated by laughter and smiles. For instance, in lesson G, short bursts of laughter (from the teacher and from the pupils) were recorded on 17 occasions (see for example App. Q 7, l. 249-251; 426-428; 436). This implies that the participants were sufficiently at ease to jointly nurture an unthreatening atmosphere.

The analysis of the transcripts shows that the forms of teacher attention in the Greek and German classes were qualitatively different in the sense that the tendency among the Greek teachers was to make 'severe' reprimands, whereas German teachers were more inclined towards making 'mild' reprimands. By 'severe' reprimands we mean those that were delivered in a raised tone of voice (yelling), revealed direct disapproval of the pupil's behaviour, often carried a hint of irony and were intended as harsh criticism, while 'mild' reprimands were those that were delivered calmly,

politely, with a neutral facial expression and were intended as a low-key intervention to change a pupil's behaviour.

In general, the German teachers' management of the classroom events in their lessons suggests that they tried to downplay strict, authoritarian control. This is perhaps a manifestation of a mode of teacher behaviour that helps establish a non-disciplinarian identity and a policy of assertive discipline (Quina, 1989). It may also well be the outcome of a pragmatic awareness that hard-nosed control becomes increasingly ineffective with pupils from secondary level onwards. Nonetheless, their positive non-verbal behaviour seems to have helped achieve a balance between ease and freedom, and the discipline and seriousness needed to accomplish working lessons (Dreikurs, et. al, 1982; Appel, 1995).

The Greek teachers' criticism of pupil behaviour and their way of dealing with misbehaviour reveals that a) they endeavoured to maintain a strong disciplinarian role and b) they displayed low levels of tolerance and were quick to express irritation. This may be because these teachers were 'locked' in habitual rhythms of authoritarian control. By assuming perhaps that deviant behaviour must be subdued on the spot, they placed themselves in a vicious circle by reprimanding pupils repeatedly, inevitably disrupting the flow of activity and provoking further misbehaviour, which again compelled them to be even more explicit in their negative attention. Another point to be kept in mind is that these teachers face an ever-present problem of inattentiveness and lack of discipline which thwarts them with feelings of inadequacy. As teacher B affirmed:

"This problem of discipline is basic, ...and you lose your temper with such terrible indifference... well, after that you are in no condition to apply anything... you are completely negative towards the pupils. I consider this a major problem... the schools have reached very bad condition, there's a very considerable slackness ... and this must reach someone's ears" (App. C).

As regards the pupils' unruly behaviour in the classroom, one explanation may be that they sought to challenge their teachers' power in the knowledge that they have another option open to them, namely, private lessons. This is a notion that has been

picked up from the family environment and which leaves pupils unaware of, and indifferent to the damaging effect it has in the classroom setting. The main function "*...is not necessarily for pupils to learn a content but to take part in the ritual of the 'lesson' for other than educational reasons*" (Holliday, 1994: 36), one of them being the aim of gaining attention from the teacher or the peer group so as to feel socially accepted or recognised in the group, which may emerge as a particularly strong inclination when overt pedagogical goals are more or less collectively undermined, as seemed to be the case. Especially for those who take *frontistiria* lessons, peer recognition becomes more important than academic recognition because it brings considerable status to the individual (Dreikurs, *et al.*, 1982).

It would also be plausible to consider their behaviour as being the consequence of an 'economy strategy': by expending energy only to prepare and learn what is necessary for the programmed tests and exams that will earn them good grades in their reports, and knowing when such tests or exams are on the way, the pupils prepare themselves, pay attention and behave appropriately only when it is to their interest to do so.

One other factor that can account for this state of affairs is that most pupils do not appear to see a real sense of purpose in the English lesson and therefore readily dismiss it as unimportant (see §6.3.1). Their 'misbehaviour' (which is manifested through constant chatter and noise, reluctance to participate, awkward silences, etc.) can be interpreted as a technique of attracting attention away from the official tasks of the lesson, to undermine the 'seriousness' of this subject (as opposed to other subjects in the curriculum). This does not necessarily reflect an anti-school attitude, but appears to be partly inherent to the traditional 'routine' of the English lesson and partly a realisation of a self-fulfilling prophesy, (the belief that negative expectations will come true simply because they have already taken shape in one's mind).



### 7.1.2 Role relationships

The insights obtained on classroom management make it possible for us to perceive the kind of power/role relationships that exist between teachers and learners (Wright, 1987). Most would agree that it is part of the traditional teacher role to hold a position of authority, and that typically, power between teacher and pupils is unequal. However, although *"...there may be agreement ... on the authoritative teacher role, there is not necessarily agreement on the form that this authority takes"*. (Hammersley (1977), in Cohen & Manion, 1981: 100). An account of the different forms of authority employed by the Greek and German teachers will now be given below, to complement research question no. 5: what style of teaching is reflected in the classroom practice and what is the relationship between teacher and pupils?

In the Greek classrooms the imposition of the teacher's power was quite evident, in keeping with the typical schema of 'teacher=superior' and 'pupils=subordinate'. In practice, the Greek teachers asserted their power by:

- holding a position of dominance.
- maintaining physical and psychological distance from the class.
- establishing a routine of working patterns.
- maintaining a choice of activities that limited inter-pupil co-operation.
- setting learning tasks to be completed individually, preferably in silence.
- frequently reprimanding pupils who behaved inappropriately.

This range of strategies may be perceived as a way of establishing a safe and predictable framework of classroom organisation and to bring about tolerable forms of behaviour. For teacher A, a slackening of control in favour of an increase in pupil autonomy would be undesirable, as non-authoritative classroom management would lead to *"chaos"*. Likewise, teacher B felt that she was forced to exert pressure on the pupils in order to deal with problematic behaviour in the knowledge that discipline problems were increasing. So, the application of the above forms of behaviour

suggests that the Greek teachers were more preoccupied with management efficiency (maintaining control) rather than learning efficiency (Wright, 1987).

The pupils themselves seem to have cultivated an inert attitude, minimised their efforts to participate and have targeted their energies towards disruptive behaviour. They demonstrated their own power and challenged the teachers' dominance (Balson, 1982) in the following ways:

- by being constantly agitated and talkative (e.g. classes C, F).
- by not bringing their books to class (e.g. classes D, F).
- by not doing their homework (e.g. class A).
- by breaking rules of conduct (e.g. class B).

These can be interpreted as surface indications that the pupils do not attach importance to the subject at school. Indeed, in most cases pupils are uncooperative because they are not motivated enough or do not see any benefits in their English lessons apart from securing a good enough grade to pass. They believe that little is expected of them and no longer expect to add much to their existing stock of knowledge.

One possible reason for the 'tug-of-war' taking place between teacher and pupils, and the problems created by low standards of behaviour and performance could be related to the problem of teacher status (see §4.3.5). Teachers are susceptible to the apparently low opinion held of ELT in state schools. Because of this, they may see control in the classroom as a means of defending their position. Faced with the lack of co-operation and a climate of low expectations, teachers react by keeping pupil activity to a minimum and doing what is necessary to 'get through the lesson'. This inevitably affects both their predisposition and their performance, and, as Dreikurs, *et al.* (1982) point out, teachers *cannot avoid* conflict unless they are freed from the feelings of inadequacy and concern with their own prestige [*italics mine*].

A further point to be borne in mind is that there is a tendency for teachers to employ methods by which they themselves were taught (Broughton *et al.*, 1978: 89). The role

of 'director' assumed by the Greek teachers reflects long-standing covert assumptions about language learning, which is reminiscent of the classical Audiolingual Method and which is adopted as a model by inexperienced teachers from their predecessors. When such dominant assumptions about teaching prevail in the hidden teaching culture, it is difficult to acquire management skills that recognise the influence of group dynamics in the classroom and their potential. Moreover, given that *"to teach well informally is more difficult than to teach well formally"* (Bennett, 1976: 160-161), requiring teachers to be dedicated, highly organised, flexible, and willing to spend a great deal of extra time in preparatory work, it comes as no surprise to find that Greek teachers are hesitant to invest time and effort in teaching informally, when they appear to have a hard enough time with formal teaching as it is and see little chance of a payoff. Also, with current contextual problems such as sustained negative attitudes towards secondary subjects like English, and a school system where independence in thinking, initiative and autonomy are not given top priority in the socialisation process of pupils, it seems difficult to apply collaborative, 'democratic' patterns of group life in the classroom (Karastathi-Panagiotou, 1987).

Of course, these observations are not intended as direct criticism of the teachers but as a reflection on their training and the prevailing 'hidden' teaching culture. Ideally, teachers should be given opportunities and stimuli to develop and internalise a different schema of role-relationships for their classrooms at an early stage in their career.

### **The German classes**

The type of social order created in the German classrooms was not strikingly different. The lesson conducted by teacher I, for example, proceeded along similar lines as the Greek English lessons mentioned above where the class did not behave as they were expected. The teacher became increasingly aware of the pupils' resistance to respond to her elicitations and questions, eventually causing her to stop the lesson and leave the classroom.

However, in general, the German teachers tended to display more affiliative behaviour in the following ways:

- being assertive but also friendly and open.
- giving priority to praising appropriate behaviour, ignoring disruptive behaviour.
- giving pupils responsibility for their learning.
- allowing a certain degree of power to the learning group, within limits, which did not work against the normal flow of the lesson.

The teachers adopted the roles of leader, facilitator and guide in their lessons, with carefully managed control most of the time. Pupil-pupil communication and movement around the class was an integral part of the lesson, while a reasonable working atmosphere was maintained. Through their behaviour the teachers transmitted a sense of mutual respect, invited co-operation and allowed the pupils freedom within an orderly atmosphere. The words of teacher H on the teacher-pupil relationship were unequivocal: *"we take each other seriously, we recognise and respect each other"* (App. C). In employing such 'democratic-like' practices (as opposed to more 'autocratic' ones), the teachers shared the responsibilities of the teaching/learning process with their classes and sustained largely non-conflicting roles with their pupils. They can be seen as advocates of an educational philosophy in which mutual respect and shared responsibility are just as important as maintaining order and displaying leadership.

On the whole, it appears that the teaching of English in the German state classes did not emerge as a critical problem-area mainly because the participants worked together as converging forces, accepting the teacher as a 'leader figure' and sharing an awareness and acceptance of the responsibilities and behavioural expectations necessary for learning in school. The qualities of mutual respect, acceptance and trust discerned in the personal relationship between the teachers and their pupils in the German classes, appear to have had a bonding effect. This means that the emotional attachment between teachers and pupils was perceived to be good, the teachers were seen as friendly and accessible while at the same time maintaining a certain distance of authority which was acceptable to both parties (Appel, 1995; Senior, 1997).

## 7.2 Classroom activities

One way of examining how the lessons were accomplished in the two sets of classes was to look at the implementation of classroom activities (i.e. what kinds of activities predominated, what was done and how), because classroom activities are taken as events that yield particular kinds of participation and contribute to the shaping of classroom interaction. The analysis of this lesson feature relates to research question no. 9: *"what is the nature of the classroom activities taking place?"*.

### The Greek English lessons

In the Greek classrooms, a total of 18 activities were carried out (A= 2, B= 4, C= 2, D= 3, E= 4, F= 3) with an average of three activities per lesson. The majority were textbook-based and constituted the lesson plan. Although the themes of the *"Tasks"* in the textbook carried potential for extended discussions of specific themes and could be suitably used as a spring-board for the exchange of ideas in English, question-answer sequences and pattern practice tended to dominate throughout the lessons. Moreover, those activities that involved a deviation from the whole-class pattern of teaching were either skipped or modified to suit individual modes of work.

The majority of language activities were carried out orally and included reading comprehension, translation, vocabulary explanation, and carrying out various exercises, in accordance with the explicit cues provided in the textbook. There was no clearly defined focus in the monitoring of pupil utterances, so at times it seemed to focus on accuracy and at other times on the appropriacy of the responses given, as the examples below show:

\*F-P: it was about computers emm, substitute teachers.

\*T-A: (computers) substituting teachers.  
at schools, eh?

(App. Q1, l. 86-88)

\*M-P: it's a modern form of education and much more easier to (have).

\*T-A: much more easierrr ## and practical.

(App. Q1, l. 292-293)

\*DIN: why (you) saying that?  
\*T-E: why[!] are you saying that.  
(App. Q 5, l. 398-399)

\*ZAF: he[!] wants # takes part in a contest and eh  
her eh her+ his parents doesn't let him to+ # China.  
to go to China.

\*T-E: why?

\*P: to take part in a contest.

\*T-E: yes.

(App. Q5, l. 523-528)

In the Greek English lessons, reading activities (in combination with or preceding structural tasks) seemed to prevail over all other types of classroom activity, and were implemented by all six teachers consistently. They proceeded along the following lines:

1. Text is read aloud by the teacher or pupil.
2. The teacher elicits the meanings of known vocabulary or explains unknown vocabulary.
3. The teacher asks reading comprehension questions based on the text.
4. The teacher asks pupils to do the accompanying textbook task.

This is identical to the sequence observed by Karavas (1993) in her study.

The reading activities were carried out as stated in the textbook. Also, simple texts or instructions were transformed into conventional reading passages. Thus, in lesson A, a short text which was intended to get pupils to think for themselves about lexical similarities between Greek and English was treated as described above, excluding the comprehension questions (step 3). In lesson D, a visual focus consisting of 'various announcements on a hostel noticeboard' was treated as a conventional reading passage with steps 2 and 3 omitted (see Appendix Q4). Also, in lesson E, an 'advice' letter in the textbook was carried out as a reading activity in the manner described above. According to teacher A, reading the various texts that appear in the book or reading aloud the work done at home is "*the strong point*" of the class, as it gives the pupils confidence and is an easy way of letting them feel that they are taking part in the lesson.



Only one listening activity was observed, in teacher E's lesson, where the procedure followed was the same as in the reading activities. In lesson B, a listening activity that appeared in the unit was converted into a reading activity because, according to the teacher there was only one tape recorder for all the teachers and this was "*a problem*" (App. Q2, l. 163-164).

Pair or group work activities were observed only in lesson B: the teacher gave the class a few minutes to prepare a role play activity that focused on discussing a problem and getting advice. The pairs of pupils were instructed to make up a dialogue based on the explicit cues that were provided in the textbook. While this was taking place, the teacher watched and waited for the first pair to put their hands up when they were ready. No questions were asked and no explanations or guidance were provided. This same role play also came up in lesson E, but was converted into controlled individual work where the teacher read aloud the instructions, the information, and each of the cues for the speaker in advance, and then selected a different pupil each time to construct the appropriate utterance.

Supplementary activities took the form of extensions of the textbook tasks that emphasised a particular grammar feature. For example, in order to provide additional practice in using advice expressions like "*If I were you...*" or "*Maybe you could...*" teacher B made up a number of situations on the spot and elicited appropriate responses from individual pupils. Likewise, teacher D wrote up a number of situations on the blackboard and requested that pupils construct sentences using "*should have*". Teacher E extended a reading activity by asking the class to "*look for all the advice expressions*" that appeared in the text. The kind of practice provided and the contributions of the pupils were quite controlled; the teacher had a specific answer in mind and the pupils were expected to come up with that answer only. In this way, she took full responsibility in orchestrating the interaction and securing the pupils' compliance with the classroom rules.

Despite the regular appearance of tasks requiring pair- or group work (and the strong educational rationale supporting them in the Teacher's Manual (Dendrinou, 1985),

the Greek teachers preferred controlled activity types (such as pattern practice) where they could specify contributions, impose constraints on the kind of answers required from individuals, check turn allocation, determine the duration and direction of the discourse, etc. The exchange of information not previously supplied in the text, or inferring views or opinions through open-ended or 'why' questions rarely appeared in the transcripts. A likely explanation for this may be that the mechanics of conducting reading activities and pattern practice provided teachers with a sense of control over the lesson procedure: the posing of display or 'yes-no' type questions constituted one of the easier ways of inviting pupil participation, and drilling was perhaps too useful a technique to discard if the pupils were to be given *some* speaking practice. Pair-work is a well-known and useful technique of giving the more competent pupils a chance to stretch their skills (Prodromou, 1982) but it presupposes a genuine willingness to take part, which, in the case of the Greek English lessons was apparently 'in short supply' and for many teachers it was a risky move because of the disruption it could cause. Also, pair- and group-work was regarded with some scepticism because of the difficulty of monitoring whether the pupils actually speak in the target language or do what they are supposed to be doing.

### **The German English lessons**

The German English lessons G-K yielded a total of 16 activities (lesson G= 4, H= 4, I= 3, J=1, K= 4), with an average of three activities per lesson. A distinct feature of the lessons in the German classrooms (particularly G, H, I, K), was the oral revision or homework check, an activity type which served the purpose of bringing the subject matter into focus and getting feedback from the pupils. For example, the first part of lesson I was an oral revision of previously covered material on American Indian History. Also, the first activity of lesson K was a homework check which involved the pupils orally presenting their answers to an exercise from the workbook.

Reading activities were also implemented, though they were less prevalent in this sample of lessons. They adhered more or less to the sequence described earlier, whereby text is read aloud by the teacher or pupil, the teacher elicits the meanings of

known vocabulary or explained unknown words, asks reading comprehension questions based on the text. Finally, the teachers introduced new exercises to extend or supplement the activity.

Specifically, teacher G's class had been working on a reader (*Black and White*) based on the theme of racial discrimination, one of a series of readers designed to match linguistic content and level of difficulty with the abilities of the pupils. Teacher G initiated the reading activity by discussing the meaning of certain vocabulary items that appeared at the bottom of the page. Individual pupils took turns to read parts of the new chapter aloud. Explicit attention was paid to pronunciation and the detailed study of the ideas in the story. In-between the reading, the class was asked to comment on what was mispronounced and teacher G gave his own feedback on the reading performance of each pupil at the end. Subsequently, he asked reading comprehension questions on the text.

In lesson I, two reading activities were carried out from the textbook. The teacher called upon a few pupils to read a quotation by an American Indian chief and then posed a series of comprehension questions that were intended to get the pupils to agree with the text. She then attempted to get the pupils to elaborate on this particular view by prompting them to illustrate how humans treat the earth by giving examples. A new text, entitled "*From Little Big Horn to Wounded Knee*" was read out in parts by some volunteers. Teacher I dealt with the unknown words by supplying explanations of their meanings and again proceeded to ask the class comprehension questions relating to the text.

It is noteworthy that, in 3 of the 5 English lessons, the German teachers created opportunities for their pupils to exercise their productive skills by introducing guided writing activities. For instance, in lesson G, the class was requested to write about the attitudes of a specific character, by selecting those sections where his prejudices were most clearly expressed. This activity provided (covert) practice in converting sentences from direct to reported speech. Also, teacher H involved her class in a guided creative writing exercise which was subsequently linked to a listening

activity. She gave the class a group of words and invited them to combine them in any way they liked in order to make up a short story. She went around the classroom helping pupils with their writing or clarifying meanings. The main activity in lesson J, the dictation practice, also involved writing. A passage from the textbook was read aloud by the teacher, first in its entirety and piece by piece with pauses in-between, to give the pupils time enough to write.

There was no officially designated pair or group work. In lessons G and H however, it was in fact considered normal for pupils to freely work in pairs on their writing tasks, while in lesson K active pupil-pupil interaction was encouraged during the question-answer activity where the pupils thought up their own questions and chose a classmate to give the answer.

Some of the activities seemed to interest the pupils, as they involved doing something new or unexpected. In the case of lesson G for example, it had to do with following the developments of a story, in lesson H it had to do with working with words which turned out to be part of a contemporary popular song. Also, in lesson K the activity with 'question' cards, where pupils were required to find the answer developed into a 'highlight' in the lesson as it drew a lot of contributions. This kind of 'interest-boosting' seemed to help refocus the pupils' attention.

### **7.3 Interaction patterns and teaching style**

This section presents the results regarding the dominant patterns of classroom interaction observed in each lesson (research question no. 6), and the type of teaching style that emerged from the interaction (research question no. 5). The reason for exploring the interaction patterns within each classroom was to examine the interplay between teachers and pupils, the kinds of roles and positions assigned to the participants and how these contributed to the quality of the lessons.

In the English language lessons of the Greek schools, the dominant interaction patterns were as follows (Malamah-Thomas, 1987; see also Chapter Three, §3.6):

- a) the teacher addresses the whole class,
- b) the teacher addresses a group of pupils or an individual pupil, and
- c) the teacher works with the textbook.

The above combination was employed consistently by teachers A, B, D and E. It was also attempted by teacher F, although her efforts were undermined by the pupils' unruly behaviour. She used a combination of the above-mentioned interaction patterns on a smaller scale, addressing only a small section of the class (i.e. those pupils who were seated nearest to her) and interacting with a handful of individuals, giving instructions and asking questions in relation to the given task. Teacher C alternated whole class instruction with nominations of individual pupils in lockstep, i.e. one after the other in their seating order. Individual pupils contributed to the lesson with the teacher as primary interactant, particularly when reading something aloud or giving an answer (lessons A, B, D), but seldom interacted with the teacher at a personal level (on occasions when they were receiving extra assistance). In the main, the class made a poor audience.

In general, the Greek English lessons displayed certain 'baseline' features of conventional classroom organisation and management, in that:

- a) they were teacher-fronted: all teachers were positioned at the front and talked to the class as a group. This position had the effect of creating a visible physical distance between them and the class.
- b) the teachers exercised direct control over the class and cast themselves as the central object of focus in all classrooms, except in lesson F where the teacher was distinctly not the focus of everyone's attention. Only teacher B purposefully employed indirect control mechanisms towards the end of the lesson by stepping back and staying silent in order to enable the pupils to do a role play with their neighbours.
- c) the teachers primarily fulfilled the function of 'instructor and controller' (Karavas, 1993: 242) by deciding what was acceptable performance, what the next steps in the lesson should be, when the pupils should talk and what they should say (provide a specific reply).

d) by seeking to transmit the content of their subject as experts, the teachers performed the role of 'knower and informant' (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975: 60).

An extract from lesson E illustrates these points:

- Teacher E is standing at the blackboard,  
looking into her book:
- \*T-E: can anybody give us the Greek[!] word  
for this (word) [""] pole vault.
- \*LLL: αλμα εις υψος. high jump.
- \*T-E: no.
- \*M-P: αλμα επι κοντο. pole vault.
- \*T-E: and please[!] raise your hand.  
αλμα επι κοντο. pole vault.
- (App. Q5, l. 71-78)
- ...
- \*T-E: yes, xxx.  
or you'd better+ or why don't you  
combine those two things?  
be an athlete and a doctor.
- \*F-P: ε δε γινεται. it's not possible.
- \*T-E: yes, of course.  
it's possible.  
page a hundred twenty six.
- (App. Q5, l. 455-463)
- \*T-E: not[!] you, somebody else.  
why?  
why don't his or her parents permit[!]  
him or her go to China?  
VOU?
- \*VOU: (because) it's very expensive?
- \*T-E: yes, that's right!  
it's too expensive to go to China.
- (App. Q5, l. 534-540)

Informal interaction between pupils or background talk was directly suppressed by the Greek teachers, and pupils were told to be quiet and attentive. However, the teacher's reprimands either only had a temporary effect or tended to be disregarded, as in lessons C and F.

The findings observed suggest that the Greek teachers, regardless of their years of experience, kept to a traditional, teacher-centred style which was, on the whole, also formal and authoritarian (non-permissive). The formal interaction patterns appearing in the Greek classrooms highlight certain *culturally specific norms* (Holliday, 1994: 22-25) which seemed to regulate the behaviour of the members of the group. First,



they point to a tendency whereby individual performance and individual gain was sanctioned rather than group cohesiveness, and where emphasis was placed on academic skills. Formal interaction patterns in the Greek classrooms sustained this norm: Greek pupils were strongly inclined to participate and work in the lesson as individuals.

Second, in Greek schools the whole teaching process is based on a didactic approach and rote learning, meaning that the imparting and reproduction of factual information is the pivotal point of the teaching process<sup>52</sup> (Karastathi-Panagiotou, 1987; Boyes & Spiliotopoulou-Papantoniou, 1993). In keeping with this manner of teaching, the teachers co-ordinated the lesson from the front of the classroom, and guided their pupils closely through the material. Moreover, in compliance with this tradition, Greek pupils tended to slip into the role of passive recipient, demonstrating their knowledge by reiterating known information (Tatla-Beidler, 1992). Collaborative pair- /group work or other activities intended to make the class participate creatively in the learning process were either ignored or modified by the teachers, as they seemed 'foreign' and diverged from the familiar lesson routine. When an attempt at group work was made, as in lesson B, at first there was silence as though the class had been taken by surprise:

\*T-B: who do you want to work with?  
[no response from the class.  
with eye contact and hand gestures T-B divides the class.  
increasing commotion]  
(App. Q2, l. 1055-1066)

If anything, this suggests that the class was unused to the procedure of forming groups and working autonomously.

As the teachers' efforts to conduct their lessons were often beset by interruptions, disruptions and negative attention, social interaction within the groups emerged as "*divergent*" or "*underaccommodative*", (see Chapter Three, §3.5.3). In other words, to a certain extent, the success of the lessons was undermined by the affective forces at play (see §7.1).

## **The German English lessons**

In the German English language classes the situation was slightly different in that classroom interaction occurred in combinations of the following four patterns:

- a) the teacher addresses the whole class,
- b) the teacher addresses a group of pupils or an individual pupil
- c) an individual pupil interacts with the teacher or fellow classmate.
- d) the teacher works with the textbook.

Specifically, teachers G, H, I and J addressed the whole class to give instructions and to ask questions, nominating pupils who had or had not volunteered, and in-between responded to queries posed by individual pupils. Similarly, teacher K drew everybody's attention to herself each time she wanted to give instructions or say something which applied to all pupils. The teachers also worked with a reader (G), textbook (I, J), textbook and workbook (K), or worksheet (H).

Like their Greek colleagues, the German teachers, too, appeared to favour a teacher-centred classroom where they adopted roles of instructor and controller, knower and informant, and approached their classes in an authoritative manner, providing firm direction and leadership. For example, they determined the extent to which a question-answer routine with an individual pupil would be prolonged and decided when the pupils should take the floor, controlling pupil movement and seating arrangements, etc.

At the same time however, the German teachers seemed to combine formal, orderly modes of behaviour with less formal ones, thereby adopting a 'mixed' style. In particular, teachers G, H, I and K made light-hearted comments in the course of their lessons, had a humorous disposition, allowed movement and pupil-pupil collaboration in order to encourage pupil contributions, and generally lightened the classroom atmosphere. Two examples from lessons G and K illustrate this point:

\*SAB: ehm a husband is a man who eh +  
 who has a family, and # who has a woman.  
 \*T-G: ja, who has a wife[!], maybe?  
 I know # several men who have a family,  
 and who are not married though.  
 [%Teacher G looks across  
 at some of his pupils who chuckle  
 and laughs too].  
 so what's+  
 what should we add to what she[!] said,  
 what should we add?  
 (App. Q7, l. 248-252)

*T-K: ah ja okay, liess mal bitte die Ant+ fuer alle noch mal die Frage.	okay, read the answ+ the question once more for everybody.
*AND: stables.	
*T-K: no!	
*AND: ach so[!] mmm!	
*LLL: [%laughter].	
*AND: Scheisse!	shit!
*T-K: [%laughs] xxx gut, okay, good question, okay. and ehm AND wen moechtest du jetzt drannehmen?	and AND who would you like to nominate now?

(App. Q11, l. 789-800)

Teachers G and H especially took up roles of conductor and monitor during the practice stage by doing a minimum amount of talking, giving the pupils a chance to get on with the allocated task for themselves but also being available to help when needed.

The German English lessons were also, to a degree, less teacher-fronted: teachers G, H and K moved around the room and attended to individual pupils or checked how they were getting along. Only teachers I and J positioned themselves at the front of the classroom and remained there for the greatest part of the lesson. In addition, numerous exchanges between the German teachers and individual pupils occurred either on-task or at a personal level where the rest of the class was not expected to listen. Individual pupils interacted with other individual pupils on-task, and individual pupils contributed to the lesson with the whole class as an audience. For instance, individual pupils addressed teacher H privately on lesson-related matters, and others contributed to the lesson with the rest of the class as an audience. In lesson J, different pupils addressed both teacher J and other classmates, agreeing and disagreeing with various suggestions which were voiced regarding the setting of a

date for the dictation test. There was evidence of individual pupil-teacher interaction also in lesson K where the teacher moved about the classroom, helping and guiding individuals with their question constructions and nominating pupils. Towards the end of the lesson, controlled pupil-pupil interaction took place when the pupils gave each other turns.

In these classes, the patterns of interaction tended to be more varied and permitted a greater degree of involvement from the pupils. Apart from lessons I and J where verbal interaction directed from or to the teacher was dominant, in classes G, H and K communication took place in different combinations and there was a shift of focus in the course of the lesson from the teacher to the pupils. Moreover, at times the nature of the interaction was spontaneous and had a real communicative intent. These interaction patterns suggest that it is part of the classroom culture for pupils to take on more active roles and to express their opinions, views or doubts, to ask for information; they are encouraged not only to pursue individual learning, but also to collaborate in the execution of learning tasks and to listen to each other as group members. The German teachers thus seemed to incorporate a practical mode in their teaching and seemed more ready to apply teaching methods that would help pupils to be active and creative, and to work co-operatively. In this sense, they were acting in accordance with an educational philosophy that permits degrees of freedom for the pupils in the classroom.

On the whole, beyond the variations in personality and individual abilities, it is possible to consign the two sets of teachers a position along the 'traditional-open' and 'formal-informal' teaching style continua (Entwistle, 1981: 25-26). The Greek teachers conform to a *traditional, formal* teaching style (that includes features such as lecturing, one-to-one nomination and elicitation), whereas the German teachers depart somewhat from this position by employing a *traditional* but more *mixed* style of teaching (by allowing for a touch of casualness and permissiveness in their interaction with their classes). In addition, the observed interaction patterns seem to correlate with a difference in the 'bonding' of the respective classes (Senior, 1997), as

the social behaviour of the German teachers and pupils was less regimented and more flexible than their Greek counterparts.

#### **7.4 The focus of verbal interaction**

Another aspect of the lesson analyses involved deriving information from the transcripts about the focus of the interaction along the form-/meaning- and topic/activity continua (see § 3.7 and § 3.8 for a fuller account), thereby identifying the kind of organisational structure achieved. By examining the internal structure of the episodes or exchanges in each lesson, it was possible to determine the relative orientation to these items of analysis. The findings are believed to reveal the structure of participation and role-relationships from another perspective and to show how far the classes were language-oriented or meaning-oriented, how far control mechanisms were in operation, what kinds of contributions were made to the interaction (van Lier 1988; Ellis, 1990). The findings are a response to research questions 7 and 8: to what extent the interaction is predominantly language focused, (i.e. adhering to structured language instruction), meaning focused (having a real communicative intent), focused on classroom management, or focused on miscellaneous events other than the lesson procedure itself; and whether emphasis is placed more on activity- or topic-focused exchanges, i.e. on how things are being done and in what way they are being said, or rather on what is being talked about.

### 7.4.1 Form-/meaning focus

#### The Greek English lessons

**Table 10: Summary of the focus of verbal interaction in lessons A-F with respect to form and meaning**

Lesson	Focus of verbal interaction
A	combination of meaning- and form-focused interaction
B	combination of meaning- and form-focused interaction
C	form-focused
D	form-focused
E	form-focused
F	form-focused

In most cases, the presentation and oral practice of target patterns and their functions took central position in the Greek English lessons as the teachers seemed to concentrate largely on teaching the formal features of the language. Only in the first half of lessons A and B was verbal interaction predominantly meaning-focused. Teacher A, for instance, endeavoured to elicit from the pupils what they had understood from a text that had been done in the previous lesson, to express their opinions, to comment on their classmates' written work. Teacher B included a number of meaning-focused exchanges in the initial and final activities, i.e. the vocabulary and group task, as she endeavoured to elicit open responses from the class, to questions such as *"which [kind of sport] is the most spectacular of these and why?"*(App. Q2, l. 123-124), *"what happens if you think negatively?"*(App. Q2, l. 271-272).

The switches to form-focused exchanges increased as the lessons progressed, to include lengthy explanations on orthographic and pronunciation differences between Greek and English loan words (teacher A, App. Q1, l. 935-956) and explanations of



the formulation "*I would prefer*" and "*I'd rather*" (teacher B, App. Q2, l. 406-412) in making comparative statements and the use of certain terms and expressions such as the difference between "*advice*" and "*advise*" (App. Q2, l. 511-523), and "*I would rather*" and "*I had better*" (teacher B, App. Q2, l. 584-586).

The classroom discourse in lessons C and D was clearly form-focused. Lesson C started with a continuation of a gap-filling exercise on prepositions and went on with a transformation exercise (changing sentences from reported to direct speech). This was followed by a reading comprehension exercise and a transformation exercise in which non-contextualised sentences had to be converted from direct into reported speech. The tasks and activities executed in lesson D provided input and practice of the 'modal plus perfect infinitive' form, used to perform an advisory function. At the beginning, the teacher tried to generate meaning-focused exchanges (i.e. to elicit statements from the pupils highlighting cultural differences between the Greeks and the British), though the overall focus of the lesson (or textbook unit) was on formal instruction. The teacher drew attention to the main language item under consideration by writing the formula "*you should/could + perfect infinitive*" (App. Q4, l. 482-483) on the blackboard, together with a set of four 'situations' which became the starting point for a contextualised structural drill, intended to provide further practice in giving advice. Two items in this drill presented a semantic ambiguity between the input and output sentences, which was pointed out by one of the pupils. Specifically, to the input sentence "*He wanted to play his guitar*", the teacher prompted a pupil to respond with "*You should have...*", accepting the output sentence "*You should have known that playing guitar is not permitted*" as correct (App. Q4, l. 578-612). However, the former expressed volition, thereby indicating that the action had not been carried out while the second sentence implied that an action actually had been taken, so a parallel semantic effect between input and output sentences was not plausible.

Instruction in lessons E and F was implicitly form-focused, as it required the pupils to perform set tasks from the book which focused on specific language items. For example:

\*T-E: let's go on.  
 ["] Task two ["].  
 [%reads] listen to the conversation again  
 and note three[!] more[!] advice  
 expressions that Daniel uses.  
 advice[!] expressions.  
 there is an example here,  
 ["] have you ever thought about ["].  
 listen to the conversation again and try  
 to find three more.  
 [% the tape is played a second time].

\*T-E: DEB.  
 \*DEB: eh ["] if I were you ["].  
 \*T-E: if[!] I were you.  
 (App. Q5, l. 330-343)

Likewise, the activities attempted in lesson F involved filling in a graph following the reading of a text and doing a matching exercise. The teacher encouraged the pupils to produce complete, correct sentences, thus implicitly directing attention to the grammar (App. Q6, l. 181-184).

From the above it can be deduced that the emphasis on form, drilling and the correct execution of tasks appears consistent with the Greek teachers' perception of their role as 'knowers and transmitters' of specialised subject matter. This is not to say that form-focused, pattern-based instruction is objectionable or inappropriate. The focus on form is effective in its aims to the extent that it draws attention to the component parts of the structure of the English language and provides the basis for structural teaching, to which the Greek teachers seemed fully committed. However, it may be argued that the exposure to this (otherwise common) approach to language teaching created an imbalance in the lessons because, by setting narrow boundaries in the exploration of the language and its functions, it did not leave sufficient room for productive exercises, it excluded pupils' experiences from the learning process and reinforced the passive role assigned to them.

# The German English lessons

Lesson	Focus of interaction
G	combination of meaning- and form-focused interaction
H	meaning-focused
I	meaning-focused
J	form-focused
K	form-focused

Like their Greek colleagues, the German teachers seemed to concentrate on form-focused exchanges, initiating episodes whose focal point were features of the grammar, vocabulary or pronunciation of the English language. However, a closer examination of the transcripts revealed that a *combination* of meaning-focused exchanges and opportunities for informal language use arose in 3 out of the 5 German English lessons (G, H and I).

Meaning-focused exchanges were initiated during the informal 'warm-up' at the start of lesson G where the teacher questioned the class about their apparent state of excitement, while in lesson H they arose from open input questions such as "*what makes up modern time today?*" (App. Q8, l. 166) and "*what do people do in their free time today?*" (App. Q8, l. 175-77) which the pupils could respond to without needing to come up with correct or grammatical answers. In lesson I, classroom discourse also tended towards the meaning-focused end of the continuum but was thematically restricted to specific events and people in the history of the native American Indians (e.g. App. Q9, l. 181-220). Here, the teacher provided a lot of input in English (by lecturing, commenting, and elaborating on her pupils' responses) without attempting to teach specific linguistic items and also endeavoured to get pupils to contribute orally to the lesson by expressing their views on particular issues such as the destruction of the environment by western cultures, in addition to recalling factual information (e.g. App. Q9, l. 541-559). The manifestation of meaning-focused exchanges across stretches of talk (in lessons A and B as well as lessons G, H and I),

no matter how brief or far between, involved a switch to a more meaningful mode of interaction.

On the other hand, numerous other exchanges were distinctly form-focused. During the reading comprehension check of lesson G, for example, the teacher laid particular stress on the accuracy of the pupils' responses, as well as the production of full sentences and interposed a number of structural questions in-between the comprehension questions, as the following extract illustrates:

\*T-G: right, and what is said about Rose's ehm home?  
which is really her home?  
where does she really[!] belong?  
wo gehört sie eigentlich hin?  
where does she really belong[!]?  
VIO.

\*VIO: ehm she really belong to Eng+/.

\*T-G: he, she, it?

\*VIO: belong+ she really belongs to England.

(App. Q7, l. 542-550)

In the ensuing writing activity also, which involved describing the prejudices of one of the characters, emphasis was placed on the accurate and correct formulation of sentences. A few form-focused exchanges arose in lesson H during a vocabulary activity where the meanings of all the unknown words found in the lyrics were clarified. As regards lessons J and K, however, it was found that the ensuing classroom discourse was predominantly form-focused. The dictation practice involved the accurate reproduction of a piece of text in writing, while the oral and written activities carried out in lesson K were also form-focused. For instance, the pupils had to present the results of a gap-filling exercise and to show their understanding of the sentences they were dealing with by translating them into German. The teacher paid particular attention to the form and the pronunciation of the utterances produced, promptly correcting the pupils' errors, e.g.:

\*SHO: what do you call a place where  
the children can playing.  
 \*M-P: was? what?  
 \*T-K: no[!], can play!  
 \*SHO: can play.  
 \*T-K: noch mal, noch mal laut+ once more, once more loudly+  
 Leute es ist schlecht zu verstehen, people, it is difficult to understand,  
 nicht so nuscheln. don't mumble so!  
 laut sprechen. speak loudly.  
 \*SHO: what do you call a place where  
the children can play?  
 \*T-K: yes[!], right!  
 (App. Q11, l. 807-816)

Generally, both groups of teachers appeared to give precedence to pedagogic discourse by concentrating largely on managing 'core goals' (i.e. providing explicit instruction concerning the form of the TL, or exchanging meaningful information with the pupils, or checking that an activity is completed) and 'framework goals' (i.e. giving directions or making exchanges which relate to the organisation of classroom activity) (Ellis, 1990). As regards the focus of verbal interaction between the Greek and German sets of classes, it is evident that in the Greek English lessons there was a heightened tendency to provide structured individual work dealing with the practice of specific linguistic items or the accurate production of language through question and answer sequences.

There are a number of plausible explanations that could account for this situation: first, the apparent preference for formal instruction in the presentation and practice phases of the lessons may most likely accommodate the pupils' current level of knowledge, where controlled practice is one way of bringing language items and their functions to the pupils' attention, harnessing their concentration and giving them some confidence that they can perform correctly; second, form-focused instruction enables teachers to closely manage and monitor what is done in the course of the lesson and how, once again reinforcing their deep-rooted assumptions about their role as 'informant and controller'; third, by pursuing set core goals teachers ensure that they remain consistent with the syllabus specifications, keeping close to the textbook material and narrowing down the contents of teaching in order to focus largely on input that is linked with the exam. In most cases, production, i.e. the ability to use the knowledge, is not a first priority, rather it is sufficient that

eventually the pupils *"can reproduce language well"* (teacher G). Thus, lessons are perceived as the practice ground where pupils are prepared *for* communication, or directed *towards the eventual ability* to communicate in the language (Ur, 1981; 1984 ).

#### 7.4.2. Topic- /activity focus

The relative emphasis of the interaction along the topic- and activity- continuum was ascertained through a close examination of the switches between stretches of talk and the internal structure of the exchanges. By determining the differential emphasis on activity- and topic-orientation, it was possible to identify certain types of interaction (see also §3.7), which in turn revealed what demands were made of the pupils in terms of involvement and mental operations. The table below shows the model used for the analysis:

**Table 11: A typology of interaction types as proposed by van Lier (1988: 155)**

	Description	Gloss	Examples
Type 1	less topic-orientation, less activity-orientation	participants talk about anything in any desired way.	small talk, general conversation, etc.
Type 2	more topic-orientation, less activity-orientation	information transmission, telling.	announcements, instructions, explanations, lectures.
Type 3	more topic-orientation, more activity-orientation	information is transmitted according to specific rules.	elicitation, interviews, reports, discussions, stories, jokes.
Type 4	less topic-orientation, more activity-orientation	things of a certain kind need to be said following specific rules.	repetition and substitution drills, pair work, role taking, games.

Below is a summary table of the findings, followed by an account of the range of salient patterns that were detected in the data.



## The Greek English lessons

Table 12: Summary of the focus of interaction on the topic-/activity continuum

Lesson	Interaction type	Salient features
A	3; 2	information transmission, adherence to rules, elicitation
B	3; 2	information transmission, adherence to rules, elicitation
C	4	drilling
D	3;4	information transmission, elicitation
E	3; 4	information transmission, elicitation, drilling
F	1; 3	informal chat (pupil-pupil), elicitation

As can be seen, exchanges corresponding with interaction type 3 were most common in the Greek lessons. Classroom talk progressed along the lines of a narrow thematic framework and evolved around the tasks that were prescribed in the textbook. Classroom activities and content matter were "nonlocal" (van Lier, 1988: 170) in the sense that they were pre-planned. The teachers concentrated mainly on transmitting information from the textbook and controlling both the topic and the activity at hand by asking for factual information and eliciting restricted, specific responses (lessons A, B, D, E and F). The majority of sequences thus basically presented a dual focus on topic and activity, as for example in lesson D:

\*T-D: [%reads] study what some pupils living in the hall of residence are saying,  
and tell the class what rule or regulation each pupil forgot.  
okay? (pause)  
[%reads] example.  
last night # I got back here at fi+ eh five minutes after eleven  
only to find that I was locked out[!].  
the pupil in picture one must have[!] forgotten  
that closing time is at eleven PM.  
okay?  
(and what) about number two?  
what do you think?  
(App. Q4, l. 415-424)

In addition, the lesson procedures were interspersed with stretches of interaction type 2 (signifying a greater topic orientation) where the teachers concentrated on commenting and lecturing to the class (lesson A), interjecting instructions and information into the 'lockstep' turn allocation (lesson B) and providing instructions and lengthy explanations (lesson C), e.g.:

\*T-A: now let's see.  
uhh I'm going to read it once for you  
and I'd like you[!] to underline the Greek  
words which have eh the same meaning  
exactly.  
ποιες λεξεις πιστευετε οτι εχουνε  
ακριβως[!] την ιδια εννοια με την  
Ελληνικη γλωσσα  
και στην Ελληνικη γλωσσα,  
κι επισης eh, αν υπαρχουνε  
λεξεις που εχουνε φτιαχτει οχι[!]  
απο τους Ελληνες, αλλα απο τους  
Αγγλους[!] γιατι εχουμε κι Αγγλικη  
γλω – και Αγγλικες λεξεις με  
Ελληνικες ριζες, οπως το telescope  
για παραδειγμα, που δεν ειναι  
Ελληνικη λεξη, εχει φτιαχτει απο  
εκτος Ελληνικης γλωσσας.  
αλλα εχει+ κι εχουν παρει δυο  
Ελληνικες λεξεις  
κι εχουν φτιαξει μια καινουργια.  
okay?  
well.

(App. Q1, l. 742-765)

which words do you think have  
exactly the same meaning  
with the Greek language  
and in the Greek language, and also  
if there are words that have been  
created not by the Greeks,  
but by the English  
because we have English lan+  
English words with Greek roots  
like the telescope for example,  
which is not a Greek word,  
it has been made outside of the  
Greek language.  
but they have+ they have taken  
two Greek words and they have  
made a new one.

Activity-orientation (type 4) was also prevalent, particularly in exchanges dealing with the completion of the structural drills and explicit ritual procedures (lessons C, D and E). With respect to lesson E, the dominant sequences were identified as

interaction types 3 and 4, revealing a distinct activity-orientation closely linked to the tasks presented in the textbook, as with the matching exercise:

\*T-E: now[!], try now to match the name of the athletic event with the picture.  
who's got the first picture.

\*LLL: wrestling.

\*T-E: wrestling.

(App. Q5, l. 79-82)

As regards the *participant structure*, which is defined as *the rights and obligations of the participants*, (van Lier, 1988: 150, 167), it can be deduced that in the Greek English lessons:

- a) the lesson procedure was based on the execution of pre-set activities from the textbook.
- b) the teacher held a position of *primary speaker*. This means that typically, the teacher elicited information by asking questions or giving instructions.
- c) the teacher posed undirected questions to the whole class and waited for volunteers to answer. (Pupils volunteered by shouting out spontaneous responses, or bidding for turns by raising their hand (van Lier, 1988: 174)).
- d) the teacher called on one specific pupil to respond to a question or to perform some linguistic action. (The event of more than one persons talking at the same time occurred either at the beginning or end of the lessons, in-between activities or during moments of confusion or conflict regarding some aspect of the lesson procedure).

# The German English lessons

Lesson	Type	Salient features
G	1; 3	: informal talk (teacher-pupil), information transmission, elicitation
H	3	: information transmission, elicitation
I	2 ;3	: information transmission (teacher lecturing), elicitation
J	1; 4	: informal talk (pupil-teacher), structural drill
K	4	: structural drilling

The greatest part of the verbal interaction coincided with interaction type 3 where a dual focus on topic and activity was maintained, particularly in lessons G, H and I. Classroom discourse was regulated mainly by the teacher's instructions and questions, while the topic(s) were derived from the respective source that was being used (reader, textbook, etc.). In lesson H, for example, the pupils were required to summarise the content matter covered in the previous lesson and to write up a short story by combining a set of given words. Although the topic in the writing activity was not defined, it was restricted through the exclusive use of the given words (App. Q8, l. 196-205).

Interaction types 2 and 3 constituted the core of the discourse in lesson I. Here, the teacher questioned the class on previously taught material for a significant proportion of time, while liberally adding information and elaborating on pupils' responses. The discourse was loaded with instructions, explanations, lecturing and elicitation. It is interesting to note that, in this lesson, the pupils' resistance to abide by the rules underlying type 3 interaction, i.e. by not participating in the expected way, led to a communication breakdown:

\*T-I: and+ the white army, yes.  
that was a big[!] big[!] victory,  
and fourteen years later,  
what happened then?  
the whites took their +...  
[%T-I knocks on the desk surface,  
signalling that the pupils  
should complete her sentence  
by giving the correct word].

\*LLL: revenge.

\*T-I: revenge.

\*T-I: they took their revenge where?

\*FOX: xxx Wounded Knee.

\*T-I: at Wounded Knee,  
and what did they do there?

\*T-I: GAR.

\*GAR: keine Ahnung+... no idea.

%eng: no idea.

\*T-I: Kinder, xxx so geht es nicht mehr weiter. children, xxx it's not possible to go on any further  
it's useless. like this.  
it's no use.  
they are all completely asleep.

(App. Q9, l. 780-798)

Other interaction types also occurred, either leading up to or changing from the dominant type identified. Type 1 interaction featured at the beginning of lesson G, as the teacher initiated an 'unofficial' stretch of talk with strong topic orientation (the pupils' excitement) to which the pupils could produce responses of different kinds, although the teacher had already formed an opinion of his own. Also, verbal sequences at the start of lesson J yielded interaction pattern type 1 which dealt with the topic of setting an exam date (clearly not lesson-focused). The rest of the lesson was a case of type 4 interaction, as a 'regimented' procedure was followed in the dictation practice. Similarly, type 4 interaction was registered in lesson K, where the vast majority of the exchanges had a clear orientation to activity: executing planned activities, following the *one speaker at a time* rule and formulating correct utterances. In-between, there were instances of interaction types 2 and 3, where the teacher gave instructions and explanations to the class.

Turning to the German English lessons, it was found that the participant structure was on the whole similar. However, the teachers (G, H, I, K) encouraged their pupils to speak more, use full sentences, and activate their internalised knowledge, focusing not only on accuracy but also on fluency, as can be seen in the following two

examples, the first taken from lesson G, where the teacher has asked the class to explain the word 'husband':

\*T-G: and maybe somebody could try to explain what a husband is in English[!].  
what is a husband?

\*SAB: eh a husband is a man who eh who has a family, and who has a woman.

\*T-G: ja, who has a wife[!], maybe?

I know several men who have a family, and who are not married though.

(App. Q7, l. 241-250)

The second example comes from lesson H, where pupils volunteered to read their stories out to the class:

\*AIT: okay, eh William is an big, ugly person.  
sometimes he works at a bar as a barkeeper or in an phone company.  
of course he had another job at the car wash.  
in the car wash he had so[!] much fun because he hosed+ hosed people.  
in the weekends when the weather was shiny he had to scrub as hard as he could.

\*T-H: [%laughs] well, that was curious and funny.

(App. Q8, l. 294-299)

From the above findings it emerges that in 5 out of the 6 Greek lessons and 3 out of the 5 German lessons, verbal interaction tended towards a dual orientation to topic and activity, meaning that verbal behaviour in these classrooms was closely monitored by the teacher and kept within the contextual frame of the set teaching material. This orientation served a number of purposes: it was helpful in eliciting language from the pupils and controlling the outcome of the discourse, in providing the lesson with a structure and sequence that helped to regulate the pace with which events moved in the classroom and to economise on time-consuming management manoeuvres, and perhaps also in sustaining attention on certain forms belonging to the corpus of material likely to come up in the progress or achievement tests. The interaction achieved was largely a result of planned procedures, since emphasis was placed on teaching the content of the lesson or what must be learned in accordance with the syllabus, and the majority of tasks and activities were prespecified. In other words, formal, 'institutionalised' (as opposed to realistic/natural) language practice was exploited maximally.



The pupils were afforded a fairly narrow range of discourse options: they were required to focus on some specific content matter and to perform in a particular, expected or agreed manner, e.g. using full sentences, repeating particular structures, etc. Their output was in most cases limited to utterances constituting a phrase or a single sentence (unless given a turn to read or to present homework), and it was predictable, as their message content was anchored to the information provided by the teacher or textbook. As this kind of control of verbal behaviour is common in conventional, teacher-fronted lessons, it would be naive to dismiss it as erroneous since in some cases it is utilised as preventive action against disruption and assists the teachers in fulfilling their short-term pedagogical objectives which involve structural teaching. Indeed, it is confirmed that as teaching was predominantly language-oriented, the teachers found it all the more appropriate to *"elicit linguistically constrained pupil contributions in order to promote practice in the target language"* (Chaudron, 1988: 127).

### **7.5 Use of the target language**

This section focuses on the findings concerning the distribution of talk between teacher and pupils (research question no. 11), and in particular, the extent to which the two parties made use of the target language in making verbal contributions. The reason for examining the use of the target language is that, as the object of instruction it constitutes an important source of input for the pupils and a stimulus for them to contribute to the lesson.

The quantification of teacher- and pupil-talk was achieved through categorising and calculating the frequency of turns attributed to the speakers according to the kind of language used, i.e. the mother tongue (L1), the target language (English), or a mixture of the two. A turn was taken as the basic unit of analysis, and is defined here as *"any speaker's sequence of utterances bounded by another speaker's speech"* (Chaudron, 1988: 45), where an utterance is perceived as *"a string of speech by one speaker under a single intonation contour, preceded and followed by another speakers' speech or a pause/interference of more than x seconds."*<sup>53</sup> A similar

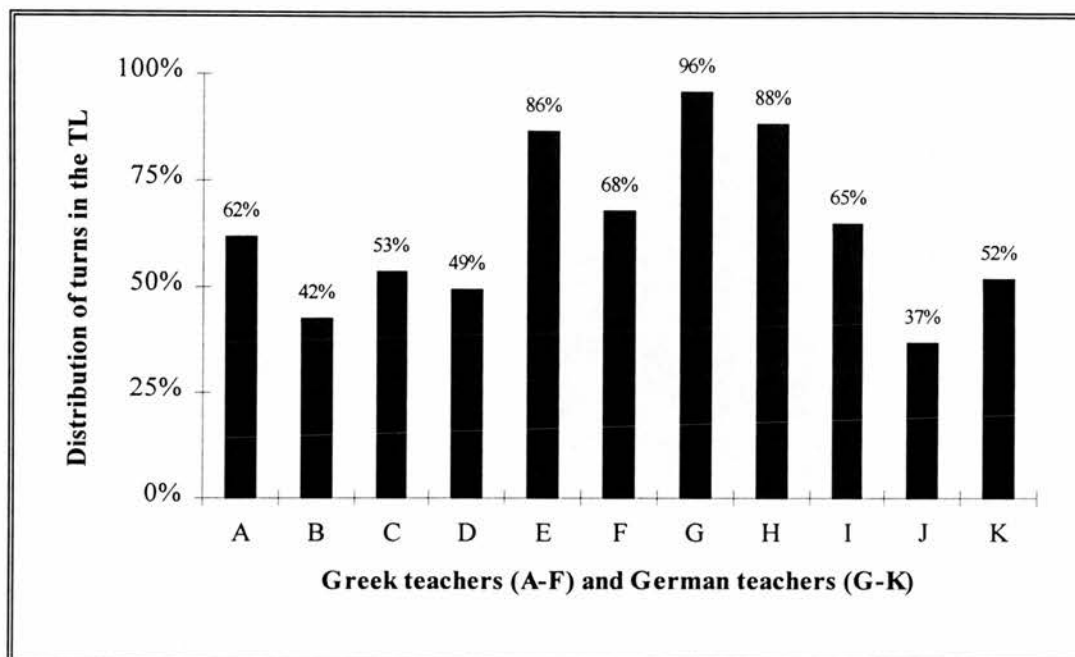
definition is given by Ochs (1979) who views a turn as an utterance bounded either by a significant pause or the utterance of another speaker (in Altani, 1992: 218). Each intelligible turn was classified as L1 and TL when the utterance was expressed wholly in the mother tongue or the target language respectively, or coded L1+TL, when the utterance was spoken in one language but contained at least a single word or phrase in the other language, e.g.:

T-C:	ναι. και ρωταει τωρα, τι ειν βαρύτερο, ενα ## pound of uh μολυβι η ενα pound of φτερα. (App. Q3, l. 493-494)	yes. and he asks now, what's heavier, a pound of lead or a pound of feathers.
------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Further, in investigating the teachers' and pupils' use of English, the functions and the quality of their output was taken into account. The classification of discourse functions was derived from the data itself. In the case of the teachers' talk, the quality of their contributions in the target language was assessed in terms of the extent to which their talk was 'minimal' (i.e. consisting of one word, phrase or clause) or 'sustained' (consisting of more than one clause or sentence) (Fröhlich, Spada & Allen, 1985), and by calculating the number of words spoken in the target language. Pupil talk in English was appraised in terms of whether it was 'restricted' (i.e. a production or manipulation of one specific structure or form) or 'unrestricted' (i.e. was not restricted to any particular language form), and predictable or unpredictable, (i.e. whether the utterances could be anticipated or not in view of their relative thematic or structural narrowness).

### 7.5.1 Teacher talk in English

Figure 7 : Teacher talk in English in the Greek and German classes



Official verbal interaction was mainly teacher-dominated and followed the pattern T-L-T (Teacher elicits, Pupil answers, Teacher follows-up and elicits again) (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975), signifying that teachers were most likely to get twice as many chances to take the floor. The data showing the individual teachers' use of English in the course of their lessons (for both Greek and German parties) appears in the figure above.

As can be clearly seen, in relation to their total language output the two groups of teachers tended to provide more input in English than in the mother tongue. The variation that can be seen regarding the levels of input in English between individual teachers is attributed to the differential objectives of the lessons. That is to say, teachers tended to provide more or less input depending on what they wanted to do in the lesson. Further insights were gained through an examination of the individual teachers' exploitation of the target language, the kind of discourse functions that were served through their use of English, as well as the quality of the turns in terms of

their length and the amount of English words produced. Tables 13, 14, 15, and 16 visually illustrate the report on the teachers' verbal behaviour.

### The Greek teachers

**Table 13: Discourse/pedagogical functions served through the use of the target language by Greek teachers**

	A	B	C	D	E	F
Giving instructions/procedural directives	◆	◆		◆	◆	
Nominating	◆					
Eliciting known information	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	
Elaborating/commenting on pupil responses	◆	◆			◆	
Criticising pupil behaviour	◆					
Reading text /instructions from the textbook	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆	◆
Lecturing		◆				
Explaining grammatical/lexical items						
Repeating /completing pupil utterances			◆			◆
Correcting pupil utterances			◆			
Communicating informally/ managing the class						

The Greek teachers' use of English served a small range of functions, the most prevalent being reading text or instructions from the textbook aloud, eliciting known information from the pupils, and elaborating on individual pupil responses. Only teachers A and B extended their use of English to carry out other operations such as lecturing to the class or nominating pupils.

Most teachers (A, B, D, E) used English to communicate with the class quite consistently in the first half of their lessons. Teacher B in particular spoke more English than Greek, in fact more than any of her other colleagues (1 712 words), for roughly 2/3 of the lesson and took fewer turns than any of the other Greek teachers, thus allowing more opportunity for pupil talk. With the exception of teacher E who was consistent in her use of English throughout, all teachers took to switching from English to Greek all the more frequently so that by the end of the lessons all utterances were being produced exclusively in the mother tongue. As the transcripts reveal, switches to Greek were made in order to deal with the presentation of new material (teacher A), or to speed up the lesson procedure (teacher B), or indicated a retreat to an old habit of saying things in the mother tongue to avoid confusion and misunderstanding.

Table 14 below shows a quantification of the Greek teachers' output in terms of the number of words spoken in English, excluding aspects of their talk such as nominations of pupils, gap fillers, "sss", and unintelligible words or phrases. The corresponding amount of English words spoken by the pupils in each respective class is displayed adjacently in the right hand column:

**Table 14: Total amount of words spoken in English by Greek teachers and pupils**

	Class	Teacher		Pupils
1.	A	1 566	>	870
2.	B	1 712	>	765
3.	C	901	<	1 112
4.	D	430	<	467
5.	E	1 295	>	409
6.	F	127	>	124

As regards the length of turns produced in English by the teachers, the majority (A, C, D, E, F) generated mainly minimal utterances, consisting of 1-2 sentences or less:

\*T-D: what do you think about number two? [%pause (0.20 sec)].  
 NAD.  
 \*NAD: eh I xxx the pupil in picture number two must have forgotten that  
 all damage should be reported to+/.  
 \*T-D: should be reported.  
 \*NAD: to the warden.  
 \*T-D: to the warden, yes.  
 number three?  
 (App. Q4, l. 426-433)

Similarly, the talk produced by teacher F in the target language was minimal, as was the amount of words she produced in English (127 in total). Much of the discourse in this lesson was unintelligible because of noise and simultaneous talk, and for many pupils the teacher's speaking turns went unheard or were incomprehensible.

Comparatively fewer sustained utterances in English were made by the Greek teachers, apart from those instances which involved reading out text or giving instructions to the class (e.g. teacher E, App. Q5, l. 47-71). Sustained output often consisted of a mixture of L1 and TL as, for example, turns taken by teacher A (App. Q1, l. 501-528) and teacher B (App. Q2, l. 747-785), or was delivered entirely in Greek in order to nominate individual pupils, to elicit known information and to discipline individual pupils (teacher C, App. Q3, l. 125-132; 188-201).



## The German teachers

**Table 15: Discourse/pedagogical functions served through the use of the target language by German teachers**

	G	H	I	J	K
Giving instructions/ procedural directives	◆	◆			◆
Nominating	◆	◆	◆		
Eliciting known information	◆	◆	◆		◆
Elaborating/commenting on pupil responses	◆	◆	◆		
Criticising pupil behaviour	◆	◆			
Reading text /instructions from the textbook				◆	
Lecturing					
Explaining grammatical /lexical items			◆		
Repeating /completing pupil utterances			◆		◆
Correcting pupil utterances	◆	❖	❖		◆
Communicating informally / managing the class	◆	◆	◆		

◆ repeated occurrence  
❖ occasional appearance

On the whole, it appears that the German teachers employed the target language to cover a wider range of functions, and to fulfil specific pedagogical as well as general communicative purposes. The scope of functions served through English included: nominating pupils and inviting pupil participation, eliciting known information, elaborating /commenting on pupil responses, giving procedural directives and instructions, managing the class and communicating informally with the pupils (teachers G, H, I, K):

\*T-I: okay, let's get up everybody, come on.  
[%everyone stands up. chatter continues (0.16 sec.)].  
okay.  
morning.  
\*LLL: [%mumble] morning.  
[%everyone sits down again].  
\*T-I: so your class tests+ I'll give them back to you probably on eh+/.  
\*M-P: today.  
\*F-P: tomorrow.  
\*T-I: certainly not[!] tomorrow, I can't do them all in one[!] day, but+/.  
\*F-P: [%overlap] next week.  
\*T-I: eh I think you'll get them Monday xxx, is that okay?  
(App. Q9, l. 21-32)

\*T-I: the Cherokees, that's right, the Cherokees.  
can you remember what we said about the Cherokees?  
the Cherokees were not[!] like most of the Indian tribes,  
what was different about them, SVE.  
[%some clicking can be heard].  
\*SVE: they were peaceful people.  
\*T-I: first of all, peaceful, and # secondly, what else?  
there was something special about them.  
they were not only peaceful, but+...  
[%silence (0.4 sec.)].  
you remember they had become like ### very much+...  
DAV.  
\*DAV: eh I think they become xxx eh rich.  
\*T-I: they had become eh rich, I wouldn't say it.  
that is not[!] really # true.  
ANA.  
\*ANA: they worked like us.  
\*T-I: they worked like the white men.  
better than say ["] us, but # the white men.  
yes, RIK.  
\*RIK: they were # more intelligent than the normal Indians.  
\*T-I: that is dangerous[!] to say something like that.  
but # they had adopted to the white men's life very well.  
(App. Q9, l. 181-202)

The teachers extended their use of the target language to correcting pupil utterances (e.g. teacher K, App. Q11, l. 504-509; 807-816), while they tended to criticise inappropriate pupil behaviour (teachers G and H) on markedly fewer occasions. Table 16 below shows a quantitative representation of the amount of target language produced (in words) in relation to all classroom talk:

Table 16: Total amount of words spoken in English by German teachers and pupils

	Class	Teacher		Pupils
1.	G	2 263	>	1 360
2.	H	1 242	>	1 045
3.	I	2 115	>	668
4.	J	1 011	>	56
5.	K	564	<	695

Teachers G, H and I displayed a high proportion of English use, addressing their classes in the target language before the 'official' start of the lesson in a kind of natural conversational mode, consistently responding to pupils in English even when spoken to in German, and providing additional exposure to the TL especially when elaborating on an answer provided by a pupil. Their speaking turns were frequently sustained, i.e. contained more than one sentence.

Teachers I, J and K tended to switch from English to German fairly often, to make comments regarding pupil participation or to give instructions. Teacher K, for example, constantly switched to German to make sure that the class had understood what she was talking about and what she wanted from them, despite devoting just over half of her speaking turns to using English. The turns in which she gave instructions tended to be sustained, while all other turns consisted of minimal utterances, e.g.:

*T-K: yes, okay. [%she picks up a set of cards]. so jetzt hab ich hier ein paar andere Fragen vorbereitet. ihr solltet moeglichst nicht auf die Rueckseite sehen, da steht naemlich die Loesung, ihr solltet das selber wissen. wer liest mal vor, wer moechte mal eine vorlesen und ein anderer wird befragt.	so now I have prepared a couple of other questions. if possible, you should not look at the back, that's where the solution is, you should know the answer yourselves. who will read one out, who would like to read one out and another will be asked.
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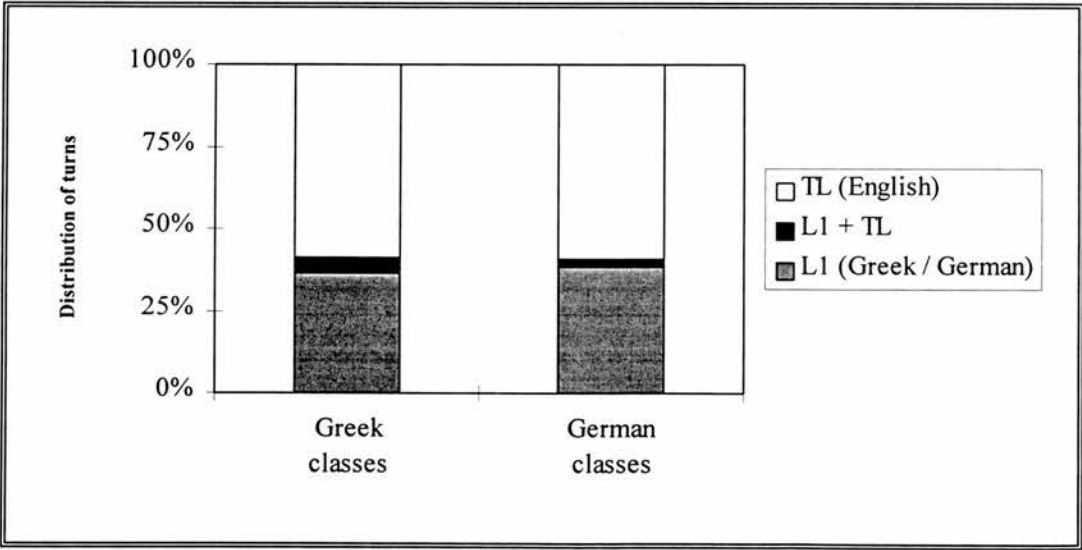
(App. Q11, l. 514-522)

All discourse between teacher J and her pupils during the first half of the lesson were conducted in German and all discourse functions were executed through the L1. The

majority of the teacher's turns consisted of minimal utterances. The teacher switched to the TL for the second half of the lesson, in order to do a dictation practice. This means that output in English served the sole function of presenting the passage, i.e. reading and repeating text aloud.

An overview of the distribution of language in the speech of Greek and German teachers in relation to all recorded talk is presented in Figure 8 below. The important similarity depicted here, is that both groups of teachers persevered in using English more than the mother tongue. Greek teachers however, also tended to mix languages (L1 & TL) more. Teacher B, for example, displayed a tendency to produce mixed utterances in her turns (31.34%) when explaining grammar or vocabulary items and clarifying the textbook instructions. The use of both languages made it possible to exploit a frame of knowledge already known to the pupils, it saved time and facilitated comprehension by providing helpful cues and clues to weaker pupils, e.g. lexical meanings and associations. The German teachers appeared to share this position, but they were providing less of a mixed output.

Figure 8: Comparison of teacher talk in the Greek and German classes



In conclusion, the analysis of the data points to certain differences which can only be designated as tendencies in the two groups of teachers. Talk in the Greek and

German classrooms was teacher-dominated: in most cases the teachers took over 50% of turns within all classroom discourse (teachers A, C, E, F and teachers G, H, I, K), thereby, predictably, occupying a significant proportion of talking time. There was, however, a difference in the type and variety of discourse functions served through the use of English, where Greek teachers were inclined to switch more often to the mother tongue in order to nominate pupils or to elicit known information for instance, while German teachers maintained the use of English for a greater range of functions. Also, the Greek teachers appeared to prefer making minimal utterances in contrast to their German colleagues who were more prone to producing sustained utterances.

It is quite likely that the Greek teachers' verbal performance is a result of their heavy reliance on the textbook, involving the repetition of instructions and providing simplified versions of language input already present in the textbook. Another factor that comes into play is their inclination to conduct the classroom discourse on the basis of right/wrong answers, which minimised the chances of providing extended talk in the target language or elaborating on pupil responses. Also, a substantial amount of input in the target language was superseded by switches to the mother tongue, probably as a way of ensuring comprehension and saving time.

### **7.5.2 Teachers' questions**

Questions asked by teachers are important because they maintain information flow and reveal the extent to which pupils are encouraged to participate in classroom talk and display the range of cognitive and affective demands made on the pupils. Indeed, in the typical pattern of classroom discourse identified as Initiate-Respond-Feedback (IRF), teachers use questions to initiate and propel classroom exchanges, to draw a pupil's response and to evaluate that response (Mehan, 1979). Considering that a) teachers use questions all the time, and that b) questioning is one of the techniques used to initiate interaction and to stimulate pupils' thinking and learning (Mehan, 1979), an investigation into the nature of questioning practices and the purposes they

serve was deemed useful for the purpose of this study of ELT classrooms (Gumbao, 1993: 12).

For my research purposes, the types of questions asked by teachers and the functions performed through them were analysed by adapting a typology constructed by Karavas (1993) specifically for the study of Greek English language classrooms. Karavas divided the questions in her data into three general groups, namely, a) Information-seeking questions, b) Control questions, and c) Feedback questions. Within each group she identified a number of question types on the basis of their functional value. Her analysis of teacher question types and their functions is grounded upon the rationale that *"an analysis must go beyond simple distinctions such as display and referential questions, yes/no and open-ended questions... to investigate what different tasks questions set, and the different commitments they place on the answerer"* (van Lier, 1988: 224). I maintained the distinction between the three general groups of questions but I employed finer functional categories/types in groups A and B (Information-seeking and Control questions) which were more precise and therefore better suited to my data. Frequency counts were carried out by using the following functional categories:

#### **A. Information-seeking questions**

1. **Display questions:** these are questions that aim to elicit factual knowledge. Included within this category are:

i) 'wh-word' or evaluative questions whose function is *"to assess pupils' knowledge or check whether they have grasped some point of importance. They can be open or closed in form and are very similar to display questions, except that no association is made with cognitive level"* (Karavas, 1993: 174), e.g.

\*T-E:   so, what's her problem+ or his problem?  
          what's ["] good runner's ["] problem?

ii) recall questions: the purpose of these questions is to assess the pupils' recollection of items which were taught in the previous lesson and should be familiar to them, e.g.



\*T-H: and ehm who won the war in the end?

iii) questions that focus narrowly on aspects of form, i.e. either referring explicitly to some grammatical item or to lexical meaning, e.g. giving vocabulary equivalents (L1-TL or vice-versa:

\*T-C: σss[!], τι ειv' το various?

what's ["] various?

2. **Communicative:** these questions request information for which the teacher does not expect a particular answer/does not have a particular answer in mind and to which a range of answers is possible. Such questions aim to elicit the ideas, opinions, experiences and feelings of the pupils, e.g.

\*M0X: it's a modern form of education and much more easier to (have).

\*T-A: much more easierrr ## and practical.

yes, and why[?] do you find it modern, why[!] do you find it eh+/-

3. **Prompting questions** are used to encourage the pupils to contribute to the lesson or continue participating. E.g.:

\*T-G: so what's+ what should we add to what she[!] said, what should we add?

4. **Probing/clue-giving:** the purpose of such questions is draw the pupil's attention to a particular item or clue that could lead him/her to make a better contribution, give a better answer, for example:

\*T-D: τι θα του' λεγες Ελληνικα?  
για διαβασε τους κανονες εδω στο Task.  
[%she points to the section in the book].  
να μην παιζει μουσικη και λοιπα.  
αρα τι θα του 'λεγες?  
θα' πρεπε να ξερει τι?

what would you say to him in Greek?  
read the rules here on the Task.

not to play music etcetera.  
therefore what would you say to him?  
he should know what?

## B. Control questions

1. **Repetition/rephrasing:** repeating an original question or posing it different words, as in this example:

\*T-B: what's Wanda's problem, what+ what do they consider her?

2. **Nominating/offering floor:** these questions are posed in order to draw volunteers or to get pupils to answer/participate:

\*T-E: discuss.  
and in Greek GIA?

3. **Reproach/disciplining** (including challenging questions): these questions are used to express disapproval or criticism of the pupils' behaviour, for example:

\*T-A: τι έχεις παθει σήμερα?

What's the matter with you today?

4. **Leading questions**: these types of questions typically carry question tags and are meant to encourage the pupils to follow what the teacher is saying, to maintain their attention and involvement even if non-verbally, by looking and listening, for example:

\*T-D: αυτά υπ' όψι, εντάξει?

Keep these in mind, okay?

5. **Rhetorical questions**: questions which are asked for effect only and for which an answer is not normally expected from the pupils, e.g.:

\*T-A: can't you do it?

[positive implication: surely you can do it]

6. **Procedural requests**: the function of these questions is to get the pupils to do something, e.g.:

\*T-G: Could you say it again?

### C. Feedback questions

1. **Comprehension check**: trying to establish whether what the teacher has said has been understood:

\*T-K: In a disco, yes [%laughter], for example.  
so, habt ihr's?

so have you got it?

2. **Confirmation check**: making sure that the teacher has understood a pupil's utterance or vice versa.

\*T-G: did you have math+ did you have mathematics?  
in the lesson before?  
no?

3. **Clarification requests**: asking for further explanation, as in:

\*T-H: okay, what do you mean by that?

4. **Correcting**: using a question form to signal that there is something erroneous in what the pupil has said, e.g.:

\*STA: unsuccessful?



**Table 17: Greek teachers' questioning patterns**

**A. Information-seeking questions**

	A	B	C	D	E	F	Total
display	39 (28%)	30 (28%)	10 (29%)	07 (13%)	24 (36%)	05 (42%)	115 (28%)
communicative	04 (3%)	--	--	--	--	--	04 (1%)
probing	04 (3%)	05 (5%)	02 (6%)	06 (11%)	02 (3%)	01 (8%)	20 (5%)
prompting	20 (14%)	06 (6%)	03 (9%)	03 (5%)	09 (14%)	01 (8%)	42 (10%)
subtotal	67 (48%)	41 (38%)	15 (44%)	16 (29%)	35 (53%)	07 (58%)	181

**B. Control questions**

	A	B	C	D	E	F	Total
nominating	10 (7%)	19 (17%)	01 (3%)	11 (20%)	21 (32%)	--	63 (15%)
repetition/ rephrasing	14 (10%)	15 (14%)	04 (12%)	08 (14%)	09 (14%)	03 (25%)	53 (13%)
disciplining	13 (9%)	07 (6%)	05 (15%)	03 (5%)	--	01 (8%)	29 (7%)
rhetorical	04 (3%)	02 (2%)	01 (3%)	02 (4%)	--	--	09 (2%)
leading	19 (13%)	18 (17%)	--	05 (9%)	--	--	42 (10%)
procedural requests	--	--	--	--	--	--	0
subtotal	60 (43%)	61 (56%)	11 (32%)	29 (53%)	30 (45%)	04 (33%)	195

**C. Feedback questions**

	A	B	C	D	E	F	Total
clarification requests	07 (5%)	--	02 (6%)	01 (2%)	--	--	10 (3%)
confirmation checks	01 (1%)	--	02 (6%)	02 (4%)	01 (2%)	--	06 (1%)
correcting	01 (1%)	--	03 (9%)	02 (4%)	--	--	06 (1%)
comprehension checks	05 (3%)	06 (6%)	01 (3%)	05 (9%)	--	01 (8%)	18 (4%)
subtotal	14 (10%)	06 (6%)	08 (24%)	10 (18%)	01 (2%)	01 (8%)	40
Grand Total							416 (100%)

**Table 18: German teachers' questioning patterns**

**A. Information-seeking questions**

	G	H	I	J	K	Total
display	22 (18%)	14 (26%)	30 (28%)	--	09 (16%)	75 (21%)
communicative	03 (2%)	05 (9%)	08 (7%)	03 (14%)	05 (9%)	24 (7%)
probing	06 (5%)	03 (5%)	02 (2%)	--	--	11 (3%)
prompting	03 (2%)	02 (4%)	11 (10%)	--	05 (9%)	21 (6%)
subtotal	34 (27%)	24 (44%)	51 (47%)	03 (14%)	19 (34%)	131

**B. Control questions**

	G	H	I	J	K	Total
nominating	28 (23%)	17 (31%)	15 (14%)	--	18 (31%)	78 (22%)
repetition/rephrasing	11 (9%)	01 (2%)	13 (12%)	--	02 (3%)	27 (7%)
disciplining	02 (2%)	--	05 (5%)	--	03 (5%)	10 (3%)
rhetorical	--	--	--	--	02 (3%)	02 (1%)
leading	17 (14%)	02 (4%)	03 (3%)	15 (71%)	03 (5%)	40 (11%)
procedural requests	12 (10%)	02 (4%)	02 (2%)	--	03 (5%)	19 (5%)
subtotal	70 (58%)	22 (41%)	38 (36%)	15 (71%)	31 (53%)	176

**C. Feedback questions**

	G	H	I	J	K	Total
clarification requests	04 (3%)	05 (9%)	05 (5%)	01 (5%)	03 (5%)	18 (5%)
confirmation checks	05 (4%)	02 (4%)	05 (5%)	01 (5%)	02 (3%)	15 (4%)
correcting	04 (3%)	--	01 (1%)	--	01 (2%)	06 (2%)
comprehension checks	04 (3%)	01 (2%)	07 (7%)	01 (5%)	02 (3%)	15 (4%)
subtotal	17 (13%)	08 (15%)	18 (18%)	03 (15%)	08 (14%)	54
Grand Total						361 (100%)

### **The Greek English lessons**

Out of a total of 760 questions asked by the 11 teachers, the highest number of questions came from teacher A (129) and the lowest from teacher F (13). The question types employed most frequently by the Greek teachers were display and repetition/rephrasing questions, followed by nominating questions. Communicative questions, rhetorical questions and procedural requests received the lowest ratings across this set of teachers, while leading questions were present only in the speech of teachers A and B. Also, feedback questions, particularly confirmation checks and correcting questions occurred very infrequently.

In examining each of the three main groups of questions, it emerged that the Greek teachers tended to give precedence to information-seeking questions, and employed a small number of feedback questions. Notably, the Greek teachers tended to expend their efforts especially on posing closed, known-information questions, repeating or rephrasing their questions, as well as prompting the pupils to participate. This suggests on the one hand that the two-way information flow was rather static, and on the other hand, that the interaction between teacher and pupils was not moving particularly smoothly, thus compelling the teachers to prompt for answers. Once again, the fact that the overwhelming majority of the teachers' questions focused on formal aspects of FL instruction rather than communicative exchanges reflect -to some extent- the priorities set by their teaching style (mentioned earlier, in §7.3) and can also be associated with the pupils' mixed ability level.

### **The German English lessons**

The results obtained for the German teachers indicate that they favoured the use of display and nominating questions in their lessons, extending the range of elicitations to include genuine information, as the score on communicative questions reveals. They asked few discipline questions and fewer correcting questions, while the smallest group were rhetorical questions. For three out of the five German teachers (G, H, K) it appears that control questions played a major part in the process of



teaching. This suggests that one of their main concerns in classroom management was to invoke the pupils' participation as well as capture and maintain their attention.

One clear similarity between the two parties can be seen in the percentages on feedback questions, which were fairly low compared with the other two groups of question types. Both Greek and German teachers produced more confirmation and comprehension checks than correcting questions (see tables). However, on the whole the German teachers tended to make more interactional modifications than their Greek colleagues.

In short, both Greek and German teachers' use of questions largely supported classroom management and structured language instruction. The questioning practices of both parties served to closely monitor what had to be done and how, in order to secure orderly participation and a smooth running of the lesson (Hammersley, 1990: 16).

## **7.6 Pupil participation**

Since pupils take part in the process of interaction, it is important to look at their performance and contribution. This section presents the data regarding pupil behaviour in the classroom, i.e. how and to what extent the pupils participated in the English lessons (research question no. 10).

Pupil participation in the Greek English classes occurred primarily through individual pupil nomination and was regulated by clear signals from the teachers regarding the permissible ways of participating, such as raising hands, not shouting out, as in the following example:

[%a pupil bids for a turn]  
 \*M-P: κυρια!  
 \*T-C: παμε με σειρα.  
 (App. Q3, l. 631-633)  
 ...  
 \*M-P: κυρια να πω εγω?  
 \*T-C: ssss.  
 \*M-P: κυρια να πω?  
 \*T-C: (να περιμενεις) τη σειρα σου.  
 (App. Q3, l. 740-745)

miss!  
 we go in a row  
 miss can I say?  
 miss shall I say?  
 (wait for) your turn

The occasional communicative exchanges attempted by one or two pupils were discouraged, while attempts at pupil-initiated (spontaneous) participation were directly suppressed by the teachers (possibly because they implied relaxation of control and could lead to disruption). Evidence of pupils bidding for turns, asking for clarifications and explanations, and negotiating with the teacher was present only in one lesson (D), where the pupils interrupted the teacher in order to ask what they were required to do by means of clarification requests and confirmation questions, because the instructions were not sufficiently clear to them:

\*T-D: now, can you tell me,  
 which of these announcements #  
 you could possibly, eh found+  
 be found in eh Greek[!] hostels.  
 \*M-P: Greek?  
 \*T-D: in a Greek hostel.  
 \*M-P: δηλαδη να φεrouμε παραδειγμα  
 η να πουμε αν eh+/.  
 \*T-D: no, which these [sic].  
 \*PAR: all of the announcements or only ## +...  
 \*T-D: which of these[!]+...  
 (App. Q4, l. 61-70)

in other words,  
 should we give an example or say if ...

\*T-D: now I want you to translate  
 these[!] announcements,  
 these[!] rules, into Greek[!].  
 \*F-P: να τα γραψουμε η να τα πουμε?  
 \*T-D: να τα γραψετε.  
 (App. Q4, l. 102-106; also l. 112-119)

should we write them or shall we say them?  
 write them.

About one- to two-thirds of the class, namely those sitting nearest to the teacher, were most attentive to the lesson procedure. Their participation however, seemed to be limited and mechanical: the repertoire of responses was restricted to single words, single (in)complete phrases or text reiterations, following teacher elicitation. This form of participation could be viewed as a 'survival' strategy employed to meet the

teacher's expectations of responding to her elicitations and showing that they were in touch with the classroom proceedings. This strategy of survival seemed to be essential for both teachers and pupils, but served almost as an end in itself rather than a means of facilitating the teaching/learning process.

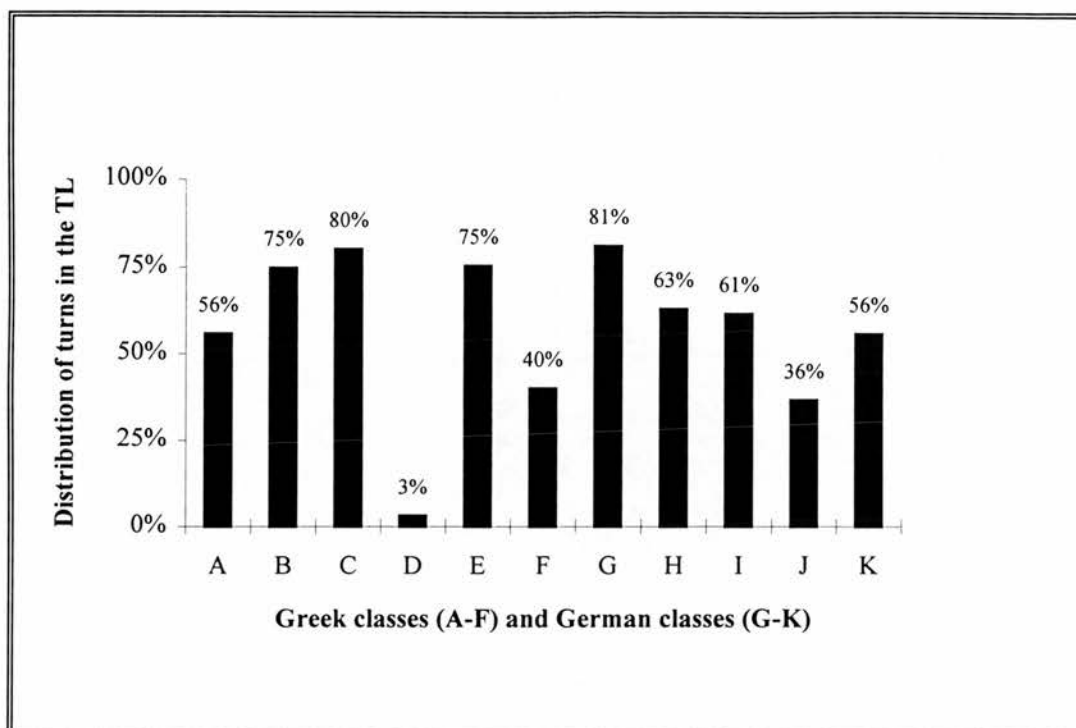
Those who sat further away from the teacher frequently ceased paying attention and began talking about personal subjects, making a noise, or playing about. For example, in lesson C, a group of boys were playing with a lighter, in lesson F another group was jumping about, provoking each other to 'play fight'. There was always a certain number of pupils in each class who did not seem to listen with attention, did not initiate discourse and did not offer answers or ask questions unless they had to (e.g. concerning unknown vocabulary). The teachers did of course try to draw the attention of those whom they noticed and get them to 'shape-up', but there were occasions where misbehaviour and other events occurred beyond their range of vision and went unnoticed.

In the German English classes, individual pupils participated verbally by either bidding for a turn (volunteering) or waiting to be nominated. They occasionally shouted out an answer, or asked clarification or comprehension questions. They tended to react to the teacher's cues non-verbally by raising their hands and/or clicking their fingers in order to attract his/her attention. Of course, there were also cases where certain pupils were fidgety or did not seem to be fully 'with' the lesson, but the general impression was that the classes were involved in the lessons and listened to the teacher and to their peers. There was chatting going on, but disruptions were not as acute as those that occurred in the Greek lessons. Moreover, it appears that negotiation with the teacher was tolerated and took advantage of this when an occasion arose:

- \*P: können wir nicht schreiben xxx von selbst aus?      can't we write xxx on our own?  
\*T-G: if you want to do it that way, you are free to do so.  
(App. Q7, l. 620-622)

### 7.6.1 Pupil talk in the target language

Figure 9: Pupil talk in English in the Greek and German classes



#### TL output of the Greek classes

The pupils in class F produced the lowest amount of English (124 words), while class C displayed the highest proportion of turns (79.92%) and the greatest amount of talk in English (1 112 words), as they were kept busy responding to oral structure drills and a reading comprehension exercise. The output of pupils in class C consisted of straightforward reiterations of the cues to the drill exercises, giving correct answers in full sentences, repeating the teacher's corrections and reading out parts of the reading comprehension passage aloud (l. 361-388), as in this example:

\*M-3: [%reads] he asked the girls if they would like another cup of coffee.

\*T-C: [%overlap] ssss!

\*M-3: eh would you like to have a co+ another cup of coffee.

\*T-C: would you like to have a another cup of coffee.

(App. Q3, l. 203-206)

In this manner the pupils produced a highly controlled and mechanical output of formal utterances, but the lockstep procedure ensured that all pupils in this class were given a fair share of turns.

In contrast, as shown in Figure 9, the pupils in lesson D took few turns (3.06%) and spoke little English in comparison with the other classes (467 words), although the transcript shows that they participated actively in the lesson. This is due to the fact that lengthy sequences of pupil contributions were delivered in Greek: first, when the pupils mistakenly provided translations of a series of hostel announcements and second, when an extended dispute arose between the teacher and one of her pupils (mention of this has been made in §7.4.1). Also, all requests for clarification were expressed in Greek (e.g. App. Q4, l. 91-93; 218-219). Pupil contributions in English mainly involved reading out the hostel announcements depicted in a textbook task and responding to the teacher's questions.

By being required to focus on conveying information correctly and accurately as required by the pre-planned activities, the pupils' contributions in English were in the main restricted. This possibly had to do with the fact that many of the pupils were at the stage of producing simple oral and written language in response to the teachers' questions and were not encouraged to elaborate on their answers. On the whole, the utterances produced in the target language were largely predictable and varied in length from a few words (class F) or single sentences (classes C, D) to more than one sentences (class A: reading text aloud, class E: answering comprehension questions). Switches to Greek were initiated by the pupils in order to break the turn-taking rules, to make side comments, to ask for clarifications or to challenge the teacher's reprimands and to voice their objections.

This relatively high degree of predictability could be associated with the routine patterns of work which inevitably set in after some time. However, this should not be seen entirely negatively, since it provided a fixed sequence, a certain orientation and constancy which pupils and teachers normally want to have in their classroom environment.

## TL output of the German classes

The pupils in class G used English extensively (80.86% of all talking turns) and their output in English (1 360 words) included: reading out homework questions and presenting the answers, correcting peers' grammatical errors and evaluating their reading performance (especially pronunciation), answering teacher's questions, reading the new text, and presenting written work done in class. The pupils in class J provided the least output compared with the other German classes (36.39% of turns with 56 words spoken in English). This is because they spent the first part of the lesson discussing a possible date for a dictation test in their mother tongue, and the second part doing a practice dictation which clearly involved using the receptive skills, listening and writing. Their output in English consisted of repetitions of words or phrases previously dictated by the teacher and reading out the beginnings of sentences that were about to be dictated to them.

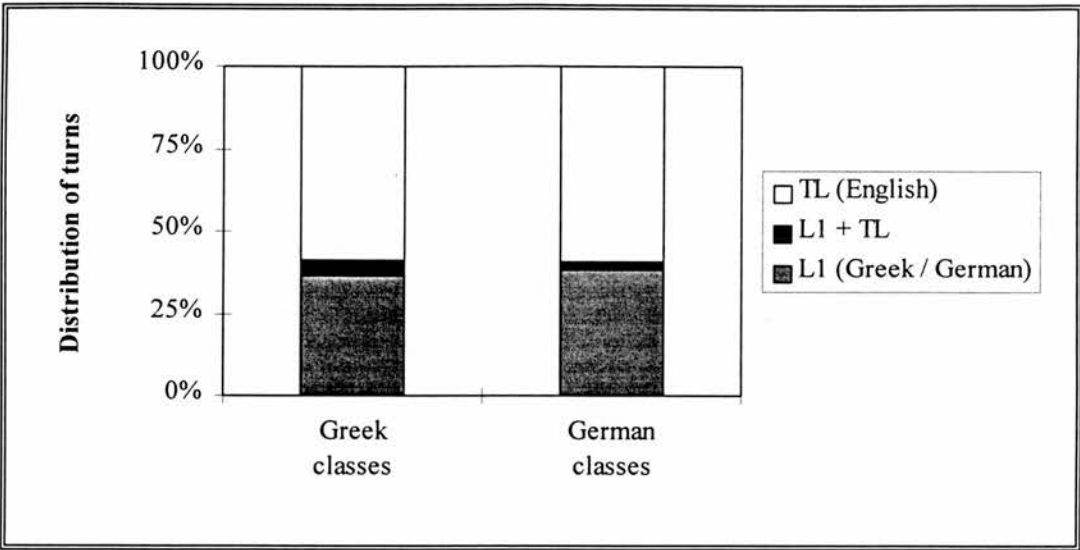
In lesson G, pupil talk in English tended to be restricted in most activities and was largely predictable, while in lesson H, the target language output shifted from being restricted and predictable (in the revision phase) to being unrestricted and less predictable (as in the guided writing activity). In lessons I, J and K the language produced by the pupils was restricted and predictable (apart from the final activity where the pupils were called on to think of their own question to pose to their classmates). In classes G, H, and I the target language utterances produced often consisted of full sentences, as in the examples below:

- \*T-G: right, and can you explain why she feels English more[!] than Jamaican?  
[%teacher G stretches out his arm to nominate a volunteer]
- \*M-P: she feels English more than Jamaican because shes was born in ## England!  
(App. Q7, l. 552-554)
- \*T-H: ja, ehm how did people spend their free time in the past  
and how do we spend our free time today.
- \*INA: I think in the past they were ## they were working too+...
- \*T-H: they always had to work.
- \*INA: yes.
- \*INA: ehm now we ## we are listening to music or reading or something like that.  
(App. Q8, l. 181-186)



In class K, the pupils' contributions consisted of short, simple utterances (often one-word answers), although a substantial part of the lesson was devoted to practising full sentence construction. An overview of the distribution of verbal output between the two groups of classes is presented below:

**Figure 10: Distribution of talk in terms of turn-taking between the Greek and German classes**



Overall, in 4 out of the 6 Greek classes and 4 out of the 5 German classes over 50% of the pupils' speaking turns were delivered in the target language. This can be seen in the chart above which illustrates the pupils' use of English in relation to their total language output. The proportion of turns involving the use of English by pupils in both the Greek and German classes was higher than that of turns containing L1 language. Yet, their contributions were made on the basis of a limited linguistic repertoire, relating directly to the pre-planned teaching materials.

The emphasis on form and on the correct (re)production of language was warranted in the sense that the pupils displayed a fairly low level of competence and were not yet considered to have reached a stage of being 'creative' with the language. Further, setting individual differences and personality factors aside, on a continuum between active and passive participation, it appears that although the Greek classes were generally more passive and less attentive than the German classes, they fared more or less equally in their language output which was largely predictable and served

similar functional purposes. However, in the Greek classes pupil output in the TL was more restricted than that of the German pupils which often consisted of full sentences.

Regarding the functional use of the target language (what English was actually used for), a common observation in all classes, both Greek and German, was that pupils participated verbally in English primarily for the purpose of a) responding to prompts and instructions and answering the teacher's questions, and b) reading text aloud (i.e. instructions and extracts from the textbook) or presenting their own written home- or classwork. This gave rise to language output which dealt with specific language forms and/or functions that were central to the particular teaching unit.

Thus, in all classes, the use of English mainly served instrumental and regulatory functions, as a means of monitoring verbal performance and getting things done (Cohen & Manion, 1981). Key communicative functions such as dealing with misunderstandings or protesting about something said or done were served through switches to the L1. Pupil talk was predominantly teacher-initiated and involved simulated language practice (e.g. drilling), while there were very few occasions for language application, i.e. 'real' language practice (as for example, in classes G and H) or the systematic teaching of communicative value (Allen & Campbell, 1972; Widdowson, 1980). Communication practice in the target language featured as something *additional to* the natural interpersonal exchanges taking place between the classroom participants. As teacher G explained:

"teaching languages is always connected with communication ...though rather in an artificial way. Sometimes in those communicative situations you try to be closer to reality maybe by picking everyday scenes, but it still remains artificial" (teacher G, Appendix C).

### **7.7 Applying selected criteria to the Greek English language lessons**

Having addressed all the research questions which were posed at the start of this study, it is now appropriate to consider the results in the light of the four criteria

given in Chapter Five, §5.4.1, as the standards by which the worth of the existing ELT situation of Greek state secondary schools is to be examined.

### **Criterion no. 1: expert standards of quality**

The criteria of quality put forward by experts in the field of ELT stress a kind of instruction that has the potential of encouraging pupil involvement and motivation. They project a picture of an integrated classroom environment where the various features of teaching methodology complement each other optimally. Yet, to achieve the ideal is far from easy. In the Greek English language classrooms these criteria are only minimally fulfilled. While there appears to be an extensive use of the target language, there is no variety of interaction patterns, no clear outlining of teaching objectives, no execution of activities other than what is dictated by the textbook (which is most often converted into individual working tasks and reading comprehension), and no positive classroom climate.

### **Criterion no. 2: curriculum objectives**

The second criterion refers to the extent to which the stated objectives are met at classroom level, given that *"objectives... are attained through the instructional process, through the organised and directed interaction of teachers, pupils and materials in the classroom"* (Richards & Rodgers, 1986: 22).

As exemplified in Chapter Four, §4.3.3, the educational objectives were defined and imposed by central agents following external, top-down planning procedures. The teaching materials and the instructional procedures recommended in the Teacher's Manual (Dendrinou, 1985) have been closely based on these curriculum objectives, which are quite detailed and prescriptive.

The connection between the official ELT document for the Greek secondary schools and the actual lesson content appears to be a loose one. That is to say, some, not all, skills which appear on the curriculum directive are given due emphasis. Classroom practice appears to meet the criterion of developing the pupils' receptive skills and

giving priority to fluency. Also, within the limits of the topics and tasks given in the textbook, it focuses on developing basic sociolinguistic skills such as comprehending small, simple authentic texts and simple spoken language, acquiring the basic skills for filling in a form, writing a note or friendly letter, etc.

However, while exposing the pupil to certain functional uses of the target language, there is no organised practice of functional behaviour or the enhancing of productive skills. Pupils are not encouraged to convey meanings that are appropriate for a variety of social occasions, neither do they engage in language-producing activities such as exchanging information, expressing desires and needs, making statements. Out of the long, detailed official list of cognitive and linguistic skills to be acquired and the range of sociofunctional behaviour that pupils should be able to engage in, some are incorporated in the lessons while others are omitted.

Moreover, although the curriculum specifies sets of structural items to be taught year by year, it does not explicitly define the mastery level to be attained, neither does it determine the rate of progress to be maintained. In other words, flexibility is tolerated in the extent to which all this is translated into practice, in the amount and the kind of work done in class. Hence, the immediate concern of the teachers is not so much to follow the curriculum specifications to the letter, but rather to cover the units present in the textbook and to administer the routine progress/achievement tests as a matter of procedure.

In all, there is a different kind of teaching and learning going on than what is specified in the official curriculum. It is a case of a progressive curriculum set against traditional practice: while the official documents warrant the implementation of a communicative approach, the actual activity types (information exchange, question-answer), grouping arrangements of the pupils, roles and functions of teacher and pupils (e.g. pupils work largely on their own, do not monitor or evaluate their own progress, they are dependent on the teacher and the textbook, the teacher assumes total responsibility for what to do) reflect traditional assumptions about teaching and learning, derived from the Audiolingual approach. Official and private

objectives are thus not well reconciled. The knowledge that pupils gain is not necessarily a direct result of the implementation of the official curriculum. In the majority of cases pupil competence in English is built-up or compensated by a significant number of hours of private tuition which takes place outside the school.

### **Criterion no. 3: local standards of appropriacy**

The criterion taken here refers to the extent to which teaching practice is locally appropriate. We have seen that the teachers' preferences, both in methodology and style, reflect an 'established' way of teaching which apparently permeates the whole of the educational system, imposing a traditional, authoritarian orientation.

In the words of Holliday (1994), the culture in the Greek English classes contains features of the 'collectionist practice', a code of practice that views ELT as a highly formalised content subject in which the traditional teacher role remains central and does not take easily to curriculum change. In general, classroom behaviour in the Greek context appears to nurture this kind of teaching practice which, on the one hand, has *"a thorough adherence to customary ways of behaving and... [reflects] existing unspoken role expectations"* (Holliday, 1994: 37-38), and on the other hand is utilised to help the teachers do their job and fulfil their basic objectives, as they have neither the skills nor the time to carry out alternative kinds of teaching effectively. To this extent, the manner of teaching cannot be laid down as being intrinsically *bad*; it has become the norm; it is to some extent warranted by the local ELT situation. Yet, mainly because the subject itself, and by extension, the teachers' efforts are undervalued, it has a weakness in that it sustains disharmony between teachers and pupils and also gets in the way of educational reform. Teaching practice is thus paradoxically problematic and at the same time fitting in the sense that it is adapted to the pervading influence of educational tradition and the tacit rules which are sanctioned within it.

#### **Criterion no. 4: affective factors**

This criterion is applied in order to determine whether or not the participants at classroom level find ELT in school beneficial or not. The evidence is sufficient to show that, in their majority, teachers and pupils agree to a lack of positive feeling. Teachers and pupils hold a bleak vision of the function of the state English language classes. Indifference and disillusionment, low expectations and low motivation suggest that this criterion is most inadequately met.

To sum up, it appears that criteria 1, 2 and 3 are only partially fulfilled, while criterion 4 is clearly not met. Teaching practice is apparently not responding well to the changing educational objectives and presents an internal handicap due to which the success of the lessons is undermined.

#### **7.8 Discussion of the findings**

At the level of classroom practice, for both the Greek and German language classrooms the 'rules of the game' are in some ways fairly similar. We have seen that the method followed for the presentation and treatment of the material is on the whole traditional. The preferred type of instruction included whole-class teaching, predominantly manipulative rather than communicative activities, form-focused instruction, guided practice and the transmission of a restricted amount of knowledge corresponding to the pupils' ability level and generating predictable pupil output. Yet, a number of differences emerged in the classroom practice of the Greek sample, regarding the participants' attitudes towards the English lessons, aspects of classroom management, and the degree of exploitation of the target language as well as the compilation of the lesson plans. A concise overview of the findings of the ELT classroom situation in the two contexts is presented below:



**Table 19: Summary of findings**

	<b>Greek ELT lessons</b>	<b>German ELT lessons</b>
<b>Participant attitudes</b>	negative	positive
<b>Classroom climate</b>	negative	positive
<b>Classroom management</b>	severe reprimands praise	mild reprimands praise
<b>Role-relationships</b>	authoritarian	combination of authoritarian and democratic
<b>Teaching objectives</b>	presentation and consolidation of language items and functions as appearing in <i>Taskway English 3</i>	various, depending on teacher's lesson plan
<b>Interaction patterns</b>	whole-class and individual	whole-class, individual, pupil-pupil
<b>Classroom activities</b>	reading, reading comprehension, question-answer sequences	various
<b>Form/meaning focus</b>	primarily form-focused	primarily form-focused
<b>Topic/activity focus</b>	types 2 & 3: greater topic orientation and +/- activity orientation	type 3: +topic and +activity orientation
<b>Teachers' use of English</b>	high input level limited functional use	high input level extended functional use
<b>Teachers' questions</b>	information-seeking questions predominate	information-seeking and control questions predominate
<b>Pupils' use of English</b>	higher than use of L1	higher than use of L1, extensive use

There is no single, simple, or straightforward explanation that can account for the 'problematic' quality of the Greek English lessons. The particular method of teaching practice that was observed in the Greek state secondary schools is such because it is influenced by a number of factors and is subject to certain constraints which permeate the whole educational system and cannot be easily overcome. So the discussion here must be as much about education and the educational system as about English language teaching in Greece.

In order to understand why things happen the way they do, we need to consider a broader contextual picture that reflects the social development of the country, its educational policy and tradition, as well as economic capacity, since the educational system constitutes a sub-set of the social system and its economy (Pesmazoglou, 1987). Such constraints are not unique to this setting, they may be detected in educational contexts elsewhere, but they do vary in their constellation, gravity and scale from those of other settings. Among the factors that affect the implementation of the English language program in Greek state secondary schools, the following are particularly noteworthy:

- Educational development and tradition.
- Problems of accountability.
- The place of ELT in Greek society.
- The status of English in the curriculum.
- The problems of ELT curriculum implementation.
- Teacher training.
- Teacher attitudes.
- Pupil needs.

The reader will note that the above factors are linked to the macro view of the Greek educational context, which has been reviewed in some detail in Chapter Four.

### **Educational development and tradition**

The establishment of the Greek education system came about within a few years (1832-36) (Xohellis *et al.*, 1990) and was succeeded by a large-scale and rapid surge of admissions into secondary education that was set in motion by populations from rural, upland areas. This massive advance into the secondary schools was associated with a) migration towards urban centres and abroad in search of better living conditions, b) a shift in the socio-vocational orientation of the young away from manual work towards an assimilation into the public administration system, as well as c) an ideological transformation which was to unite the people at a cultural and linguistic level by accentuating their collective religious identity, cultural awareness

and national consciousness and which could elevate them to the bourgeoisie (Tsoukalas, 1987). For all this to be effected, education was seen as an essential and basic condition.

As public schools opened up throughout the country, the implementors of the new educational system turned to central and western European countries in order to find educational models that could be introduced into the Greek context. The implementors, whose own education had only been rudimentary and who represented fragmented administrative bodies that lacked a specialised educational background, overlooked careful preparation and meticulous planning in favour of immediate results, neglecting to attend to local educational issues or to grade educational problems methodically (e.g. the need to organise pre-primary education or to deal with illiteracy in rural districts) (Tsoukalas, 1987). The development of the educational system thus took up an authoritarian, conservative line where the emphasis on factual content and the concern with abstract examinable knowledge became deeply entrenched and where the pupils were taught to accept and digest passively the knowledge transmitted by the textbooks or the teachers (Skilbeck, 1990; Tatla-Beidler, 1992). This was also true of the work done in teaching the compulsory foreign language subject, first French and then English, which was placed on the general secondary school program (Dimaras, 1983).

Over the years and well into the post-war period, all components of the system, i.e. the concept of education, teacher preparation, the programs of study, the methods of teaching, the physical facilities, etc. remained more or less unchanged (Karastathi, 1987). The function of education maintained a conservative, despotic character and a monolithic direction, integrating new generations into the prevailing culture and providing knowledge and skills that ensured the perpetuation of the status quo. It can thus be surmised that the ease and speed with which the educational system was set up in the absence of a stable political frame, probably played a part in impeding educational planning and stifling the dynamic forces which could have furthered its development (Tsoukalas, 1987; Xohellis *et al.*, 1990).

Perhaps equally (if not more) significant is that the essential material conditions that could support and sustain the development of the educational system, especially at the rate at which it expanded, were never created (ibid.). With the exception of cases in some large cities, the history of public educational institutions was marked by shortages, shutdowns and reorganisations, inevitably failing to function as a complete, well co-ordinated network. While the funding of the school mechanism was at first undertaken by a substantial private base, i.e. the construction and running of schools, material supplies, payment of teachers etc. were subsidised by wealthy individuals or societies, it did not constitute a constant source of funds and could not ensure the permanent and continuous operation of the schools and other institutions. Historically, and in comparison with other European countries, the state dispensed an extremely low level of expenditure for education (Pesmazoglou, 1987). For example, in 1994, a mere 6.83% of the national budget was reserved for spending on education (Panagiotarea, 1994). To this day, inadequate supply and use of school resources (exemplified in Chapter Four, §4.2.2.1 and Chapter Six, §6.1.3) continue to be a problem caused by the country's still frail economy and its inability to create stable sources of income:

"the government now owes more than the country produces in a year; ...more than its combined spending on defence, education, health and social security" (The Guardian European News, 1996:13).

In addition, at the level of administration, problems of distribution and management of funds frequently arise, since the various programs and their financial budgets are not subjected to a thorough control (Tsoukalas, 1987).

One other factor that comes into play, perhaps as a natural consequence of the anarchic developments witnessed in the direction of education and other domains, is a widespread, intense distrust in the state mechanism. It appears to be deep-rooted in the minds of the people, is passed on from generation to generation and is expressed most clearly through repetitive "*katastrophologia*" (Pesmazoglou, 1987: 318), -i.e. negativist verbalisations about the hopelessness of the situation in the public sector. This lack of faith is a feature of the domestic culture and extends to all that is not part of the individual Greek's closed local circle, including the state services.

Personal/family interests, obligations and commitments are of greater importance than civic duty or corporate membership (Campbell, 1983). No public role or membership in any institutional body is allowed to take precedence over the interests of the person or the family, which are pursued even at the expense of the 'common good'. This exclusive commitment to personal self-interest not only engenders distrust but also requires one to exploit the system if it brings him/her personal benefits (Campbell, 1983: 186). Thus, within such a scenario, the educational system becomes a means to an end, a way of pursuing central personal values such as autonomy, social status and wealth. At the same time, negative expectations which instigate self-fulfilling prophecy effects prevail, while change is viewed with scepticism as being superficial. Additionally, because most people tend to define and validate their identity by means of tradition or 'the established ways', they display an internalised resistance to change (Dawson, 1986). The consequences of the influence of such a mentality are instability, loose organisation and weak community co-operation. In short, the same weaknesses and contradictions which characterise the Greek urban ideology can be detected in the running of the schools and their programs, since they are an offshoot of Greek reality (Kremmydas, 1988).

### **Problems of accountability**

Just as resistance to change appears to intrinsically affect the course of events in educational implementation and teaching performance, so does a certain *euthynophobia* (fear of responsibility) (Campbell, 1983: 196) which is said to permeate the culture of Greek state institutions and is manifested as opposition, indifference and/or a mechanical and inflexible execution of duties and administrative procedures. A relevant example of this is the Greek English teachers' reactions towards the communicatively-oriented curriculum specifications for English as a foreign language (see Dendrinou, 1985), particularly with respect to teaching methodology and the use of the complementary materials. The endeavour to shift ELT away from a structural orientation towards a more progressive classroom practice, to place the pupils at the centre of the learning experience and to exert more of an *indirect* influence on the teaching process was met with opposition, because it

went against the established mental schema of classroom practice and appeared to be incompatible with the long-standing perception of school/classroom reality. Likewise, the use of the *Taskway* series which required teachers to make more of an effort to organise their lesson plans, generated complaints from the teachers because they felt unprepared for and overwhelmed by the load of responsibility that came with it (Karavas, 1993).

The problem of accountability comes into play in yet another way. As schools function like bureaucratic institutions, most state school teachers, like other civil servants, operate at a bureaucratic pace and mode (Cortis, 1977). Once their permanent placement at a school is secure, their work quickly becomes routinised and depersonalised. One cause of this is that there is no pressure to provide evidence of the quality of their work and no official obligation to be answerable to parents, superiors, administrators, or to the pupils themselves (Nisbet, 1990). Thus, in practice, teachers operate according to very flexible standards, while the monitoring of their performance at school is limited to occasional cordial visits by the school adviser, during which no essential quality control is conducted. As one anonymous author observed, in a newspaper article on the state of Greek education:

και οι δασκαλοι και οι καθηγητες  
της μεσης εκπαιδευσης  
απο την ημερα που θα διοριστουν  
ως την ημερα που θα παρουν  
συνταξη δεν ελεγχονται ως προς  
την αποδοση, τις γνωσεις και την  
εκπαιδευτικη τους ικανοντητα  
απο κανεναν ".  
(To Βημα [To Vima], 1993).

from the day that they will be employed  
until the day they become pensioners,  
primary and secondary school teachers  
are not controlled as to their performance,  
their knowledge, and their educational skills  
by anyone.

### **The place of ELT in Greek society**

The evidence gathered from this study indicates that although English is a highly promoted language in Greek society and is generally regarded as a valuable asset, ELT itself has different roles to play in the state and private arenas. On the one hand, ELT in the schools is essentially viewed as a branch of education that is pre-destined



to flounder, while private ELT has acquired status and public appeal because it is believed to support the vested interests of its clients. Most private institutes operate in a more personal, non-bureaucratic way and strive to offer a better service. Most importantly, they offer a benefit which outweighs the costs involved, namely, certification. This extra dimension appears to unite parents, pupils and practitioners in pursuing a common interest and setting focused objectives in which the duties of the respective parties are clearly defined and accepted. In addition, because of links with institutions, materials and methodologies from abroad, they imply excellence (Holliday, 1994: 100), and are thus believed to be more efficient than state ELT and worth the investment in time and money.

In fact, state and private ELT are linked together in a precarious kind of symbiosis (see Chapter Two, §1.4) where there is a clear dependence between the two sectors (the former supplies the clients while the latter achieves certain key social and economic goals), and where the people's reliance on the services of the private sector sustains the lack of faith in the state system, and vice versa. Not without consequence. This symbiosis has had an inevitably damaging impact upon the hidden curriculum and ways of teaching and learning in public schools which should not be underestimated (Skilbeck, 1990). Particularly lamentable is the forming of an anaemic approach to the English lessons at school, expressed through negative attitudes and low expectations regarding classroom performance. Thus, within a type of social order which has been transmitted by successive generations and has come to be considered 'the norm', teachers and pupils adhere to a narrow view of their duties in the FL classroom, 'plodding' through the syllabus to cover the units necessary in order to set the customary exams or tests. In other words, the discord that exists at the deep action level of the real world of state ELT personnel and institutions, renders the success at the surface action level (e.g. in the classroom) "*null and void*" (Holliday, 1994: 132).

## The status of English in the curriculum

Of course, the policy of having English taught in the public secondary schools, is in itself considered unquestionably worthwhile and has been firmly grounded on the conviction that it is an essential subject, a benefit to one's education and extremely serviceable to the community. English has always held a place in the curriculum as a core subject with a specific syllabus to be covered over the span of three years (at a minimum) and has existed in the curriculum longer than the instruction of any other foreign language, as indicated earlier in Chapter Four, §4.3.2.

In the hidden curriculum, however, English does not hold a key position by any means. For many teachers and pupils the benefit of the English lesson at school is perceived mainly as an opportunity to revise what has already been learnt. Otherwise, it serves as a socialising period or a time reserved for the preparation of other lessons. The root of the problem is again traced back to the past, when Greece was still a *"developing society"* (Kazamias & Massialas, 1965: 107). School adviser Tsinouka explains the origins of the existing reputation of state-provided ELT with these words:

"This... mentality has been passed on ...from the time when I was a pupil, because at that time there were no qualified teachers. ... For example, in French, I had a teacher who had lived in a French convent and we had some teachers of Italian who had had contact with Italians, etc." (Interview, April 1994).

In other words, the foundations of ELT were set on the basis of an *"opportunistic"* curriculum development policy (Holliday, 1994: 209), in which the best had to be made out of a fluctuating socio-political and economic situation. Since most FL teachers at that time were not adequately trained or qualified, they did as their colleagues were doing with other subjects, namely 'depositing' onto their pupils what they knew about the English language and assessing the pupils on what they had been able to memorise. In doing so, they too played their part in strengthening the pull of the formal teaching tradition which is the core of the Greek educational culture.

## **The problems of ELT curriculum implementation**

Through the introduction of a new series of textbooks and a syllabus based on the Communicative Approach, the ELT curriculum represented an attempt at reform through which it was perhaps hoped that the authoritarian, formal teaching tradition would be tempered (a detailed account is given in §4.3.3). However, it seems to have fallen short of its aspirations due to the following conditions:

The official ELT curriculum constitutes a closed, prescriptive plan that has been devised by the central authorities along the lines of a classic bureaucratic model and whose timetable, textbooks and syllabus, teaching and assessment methods are uniformly enforced in all public secondary schools nationwide. The inflexibility which characterises the whole education system also pervades the curriculum instruments, as is evidenced, for example, through the imposition of a single EFL textbook and the absence of alternative options in the selection of teaching materials. Since its distribution, the *Taskway* series has been criticised for not fulfilling its instructional purpose, being too easy for some pupils, too difficult for others, unpopular with many teachers. Still, it remains in use and cannot be modified because the writing team has disbanded.

Furthermore, the ELT curriculum instruments do not take into account real drawbacks such as inadequate resourcing and equipment, pupil characteristics and large heterogeneous classes. It has thus remained 'out of touch' with the target population and is not sufficiently tailored to meet the varying needs and abilities of the pupils. An equally crucial oversight is that the impact of personal values and attitudes of the target population was not taken into account, and that at the start, teachers and pupils were not sufficiently prepared to accept the curriculum changes. In addition, the sequence and pursuit of educational objectives has been highly 'manoeuvrable' at the level of implementation and not followed through with systematic pupil assessment and feedback. The combination of all the above has contributed to the existing disparity between the intended and implemented curriculum.

## Teacher training

In the implementation of the ELT curriculum, support and directions for teachers has been insufficient, so it is imperative to stress the gap that continues to exist in educational action with respect to teacher training. The remarks that have been made so far regarding the teachers' existing state of training, experience and teaching practice in Greek classrooms are not intended as a personal indictment against them, nor are they intended to undervalue the effort they put into their everyday work. Indeed, as one of Greece's prominent contemporary writers put it: *"we all know how hard and laborious the work of a pedagogue is, how much the teacher is beleaguered... and how much s/he tries to do his/her duty"* (Zografou, 1977: 169). Teachers do their job as best they can, but in their vast majority they embark on their careers more or less unprepared for educational reality and with only a small knowledge base for teaching.

Having received a specific education in the humanities which is subject-matter oriented, they have had little or no training in developmental psychology and educational matters such as grouping procedures, co-operative teaching etc. (Tatla-Beidler, 1992). The emphasis on aspects of the professional work of the teachers is low: teacher-trainees are given few opportunities to master their pedagogical and organisational abilities and to practise specific teaching skills (Polychronopoulos, 1980), while state-run teacher training institutions do not sufficiently train teachers to understand the psychological dynamics of classroom management. At classroom level, teachers are ill-prepared to apply effective forms of management behaviour. In the lessons observed, for example, teachers routinely employed a kind of time management which did not maximise on productive learning: there was a consistent loss of valuable concentration time at the start of the lesson and insufficient opportunity for practice in productive skills, creating an imbalance in the lesson procedure. It is easy to see how the lack of adequate training can bring about problems of general classroom management, which can adversely influence the teachers' attitudes and behaviour in the classroom and can create a poor environment for learning (Balson, 1984).

## Teacher attitudes

Greek state school teachers of English are well aware that their job can be difficult and frustrating. Looking realistically at their work, most recognise that they are more dissatisfied than satisfied with it. They are unable to induce reluctant pupils to learn and have to face real obstacles in the classroom that are present as a permanent side-effect of the existing social conditions (e.g. the influence and intervention of private ELT) as well as the contradictory demands placed upon them by the public (to do their job efficiently despite the low value attached to their subject). This inevitably leads to a low morale (Stevick, 1972: 89), where feelings of self-esteem and interest for the work at hand are extremely hard to sustain (Dreikurs, *et al.*, 1982).

An additional factor to be borne in mind is that teachers *"largely work in isolation and therefore, tend to struggle with problems in private"* (Ferguson, 1988: 166). As with myriad other teachers elsewhere, it is true in this case too that contact between colleagues at a professional level in school or in the context of in-service courses is rather atypical. In the local teaching culture, discussions are usually restricted to 'non-substantial safe talk', as teachers prefer to avoid mentioning work-related problems, lest this suggests weakness or incompetence on their part (Appel, 1995). As a consequence, the individual teachers' burdens and their need to find ways of coping effectively with the problems of teaching are rarely dealt with openly. Furthermore, we cannot ignore the fact that there are no visible rewards (material or other) that would induce teachers to commit themselves to their job, neither are incentives offered for them to appreciate and pursue continuous improvement.

## Pupil needs

Negative reactions from teachers are also provoked by the behaviour of their pupils. Elaborating on a point raised by Prodromou (1982), it seems to be the case that Greek pupils do not apparently have any (short term) need to apply themselves to learning English at school and therefore do not have the motivation to seek and exploit potential learning opportunities in the classroom (Allwright, 1988). A

spontaneous comment made by one of the pupils during lesson A indicates what seems to be the shared feeling about the ELT experience at school:

\*T-A: well.  
suppose then you've got a very bad  
experience of having a teacher  
## teaching you ## a foreign language,  
eh?

\*M-P: φροντιστήρια έχουμε.

we have *frontistiria* [%private language  
institutes].

(App. Q1, l. 405-409)

This apparent lack of need to take the lessons seriously seems to be accompanied by a discernible lack of interest. This is substantiated in a comment made by teacher A, who stated that *"when we move to a freer exercise, the pupils get stuck unfortunately because they don't have the knowledge or the interest that is necessary"*, often resulting in pupils not paying enough attention. Statements such as the ones cited here highlight one of the reasons why the teaching conditions in the classroom come to be unfavourable and why 'misbehaviour' occurs so persistently. While pupils are naturally affected by the teachers' behaviour and what goes on in the classroom, they themselves are 'carriers' of the beliefs and attitudes of the family, neighbours or peers who make up the wider social circle outside the school environment, and whose opinions about the benefits of state ELT are predominantly negative. Consequently, most pupils are convinced that their needs and interests will be satisfied outside the school foreign language classroom anyway, and so do not consider English lessons at school as particularly important or essential.



## 7.9 Summary

In this chapter, the results of the analysis have been presented and followed-up by a discussion of the possible reasons for which ELT in Greek state schools operates the way it does. It has been pointed out that a combination of factors, including low expenditure for education, the absence of systematic and continuous educational programming, the inflexible and uniform curriculum, inadequate teacher training, a mentality of resistance to change and mistrust on the part of the broader community, have all served to perpetuate a vicious circle that contributes to the problems of FL education and sustains the existing educational tradition.

It must be noted however, that 'disapproved' teaching practices are more often the norm rather than the exception, and that deterring factors like the ones mentioned in this chapter are in force in educational systems around the world. In the case of Greece, considering that legislative attempts to depart from the traditional movement in education and the first discerning proposals for language teaching were made as late as 1976, it seems that education in general and state ELT in particular, are going through a period of transition where considerable effort still needs to be made before improvement can come about.

## CHAPTER EIGHT: Recommendations and Conclusion

One of the main concerns of this evaluation has been to make it useful. This entails using the information derived from the study in order put forward concrete recommendations that could constitute an appropriate course of action for all concerned.

### 8.1 Recommendations

In considering possible areas of action within the context of the Greek public education system, the following facts have been kept firmly in view:

The authorities typically set priorities and reach decisions on the basis of political interests. They are also faced with pressures to keep state spending down (Tzartzas, 1996). This means that aspirations to translate research findings into policy are substantially subdued and changes are slow to evolve. However, they have not by any means remained idle. Certain important and helpful steps have recently been taken, such as 'setting' FL classes in schools throughout the country<sup>55</sup>. Although initial attempts to set classes brought about strong reactions from parents who considered this a form of discrimination which they refused to tolerate (Diamantidou, A., personal communication), the measure is currently half-way towards full implementation and should enable teachers to work more effectively with homogeneous classes and better regulate the pace and level of difficulty of classroom activities. It could also remedy the 'rivalry' between state and private ELT by allowing teaching to operate on complementary tracks and balance out the benefit that pupils can gain from both sides.

A further step being taken involves developing a plan for language certification which will be attached to the school-leaving certificate and will provide a guarantee that the recipient has mastered the foreign language to a particular level. This step may be seen as *"a crucial pressure point for change"* (Ferguson, 1988: 197), as it is

likely to have positive consequences for active teacher and pupil participation and will provide them with an incentive to perform better. It is assumed that the validity of such a certification will be recognised in the same way as the official school-leaving certificate. Private language institutes will still be in a position to offer services that the state cannot, such as intensive courses or courses for specific purposes (Tsinouka, K., personal communication).

In the debates about the quality of education over the past twenty years or so (not solely specific to, but including ELT), Greek scholars have advocated *the radical renewal of the national educational system* which, in their view, should become *progressive* and contribute *more specifically to the development of pupils' critical faculties, their abilities to be creative and imaginative, to think divergently as well as convergently, to develop their strategies of co-operation...and feelings of responsibility towards themselves and others* (Karastathi, 1987: 13-14; Kakkou, 1994: 60-61). Many have elaborated at length on all components which need to undergo fundamental changes (including the educational philosophy, the curriculum, teaching practice, material means and support, etc.). Their position is certainly legitimate and is clearly held with the best interests of the Greek people at heart, but it implies that the achievement of change requires *sweeping, widespread participation* at all institutional levels from top to bottom, and that all efforts have to be geared towards a far-reaching campaign to uplift the public educational system. To accomplish this *en masse* would be ideal, but it presupposes certain proactive attitudes and a socio-political and economic stability which need considerable time and effort to develop.

Quality improvement can be achieved through incremental steps which appear feasible and contribute towards *pragmatic planning*. Instead of presenting an ambitious inventory of long-term solutions, I choose to adopt a real-world, culture-sensitive approach (Holliday, 1994) and look at the specific problem of Greek state secondary ELT from a micro-perspective. I believe it is best to concentrate on the question of *what can be done next* to help improve state ELT and assist state-school teachers with their job.

Significant improvements in the state ELT scene could be brought about through further development in the following complementary domains:

- a) The expansion of professional support at regional level.**
- b) Continued provision of pre- and in-service teacher training.**

### **8.1.1 Professional support at regional level**

Fresh initiatives need to be taken in improving horizontal lines of communication on a local basis and encouraging a closer collaboration of teaching staff with the school advisers. For this to happen:

- The number of school advisers for secondary level ELT should at least be doubled.
- They should be holders of qualifications that accredit professional competence.
- Advisers should live in the community in which they are based and be given jurisdiction over district areas in the periphery, so that they can concentrate their energy on supporting a locally-based circle of teachers.

School advisers are mediators between the 'top' and 'bottom' levels in the education hierarchy, with ten years of teaching experience behind them. They are charged with visiting schools in order to disseminate new developments, to oversee the implementation of innovations, to inform and advise teachers, to observe lessons, to regulate in-service meetings, to maintain close contact with schools and their staff. Their office endows them with important advantages: first they hold a position of authority and influence, and maintain the vertical channels of communication between the central administration and the district schools open. Second, in performing specific duties to assist teachers in their work, they get to know the circumstances under which teaching takes place, they are familiar with the hidden curriculum and the body of teaching practices established over time in the schools, and have a fairly clear perception of the cultural profile and values of the teachers. Third, their activity gives rise to quality control in a constructive sense and contributes to decentralisation to a degree. School advisers hold a key position in the system, they are therefore seen as *prime* agents of change.

Although their contribution to education is vital, their role and the nature of their work has so far been arduous and unfulfilling. At present, there are eight state school advisers responsible for ELT in Greece, which is by no means an adequate number. Each adviser supervises a host of provinces encompassing the mainland, rural areas and the islands. For example, one adviser must single-handedly tackle schools in no less than 11 district areas spread over a very mixed geographical terrain (Tsinouka, K., personal communication). The reality of this is that advisers have to be continually mobile, managing only flying visits in a limited number of schools, failing to be fully effective in their work, and of course not possibly getting to know all teachers long enough in order to establish more personal working relationships with them. Moreover, the work of advisers is not always seen sympathetically, as their rushed, pressured style of work is often (mis)taken as threatening or intrusive, while in some cases their work is not seen at all.

To facilitate the process of change towards better ELT provision, regional advisers must:

- organise meetings which should take place periodically, and have a mandatory (or semi-mandatory) character and accentuate a concern with the human (e.g. the welfare of the teachers) as well as professional (e.g. the quality of teaching) aspects of the job.
- hold scheduled talks with teachers in order to discuss general progress and, using the syllabus as a checklist, to confirm short-term objectives to be attained at set periods of time.
- nurture a supportive and friendly relationship with the teachers by allaying their fears or suspicions, making them more aware of the value of their contribution as FL teachers, enhancing their sense of responsibility for what they are doing, as this will help them experience themselves as more successful personally, professionally, and socially and strengthen their sense of credibility.
- provide person-to-person practical support on issues and problems that relate to their particular working environment (classroom management, role-relationships, materials use, pupil assessment, etc.).

- encourage teachers to make full use of the educational resources that are available. (It is known that teachers rarely use the teaching aids, either because they wish to make them available to other colleagues or because they are unaccustomed to using them and fail to incorporate them in their lesson plans effectively).
- promote a principled integration or combination of teaching methods that are most economical and effective in the circumstances and they fulfil the overall objectives of teaching. Taking into consideration that specific teaching methodologies can only be successfully applied in "*relatively favourable*" educational environments (Wilkins, 1983, in Appel, 1995: 21), solutions may vary from district to district and from school to school and may involve the implementation of traditional audio-lingual and functional/ communicative activities, combined teacher-fronted and group work, pattern practice and translation, etc. (van Lier, 1988: 163).
- endeavour to amplify the usefulness of test-setting by monitoring the teachers' assessment and feedback procedures.
- encourage teachers to organise meetings and seminars themselves and help sustain their interest in the job (by exchanging ideas as well as opportunities to compare and contrast teaching strategies with other colleagues, to assess them in terms of their appropriateness, share the high and low points of their teaching experiences, etc.), and support schemes in which contact with native speaker assistants can be arranged for short spans of time.
- co-ordinate or assist in the collection of raw data which could help monitor the ELT situation in secondary schools and contribute towards the accumulation of adequate statistics and records for the purpose of conducting surveys.
- offer rewards for good teaching (such as certificates of merit or other bonuses) upon approval by the department of Education.
- demonstrate the highest professional commitment themselves and foster positive professional attitudes through engagement in their own work.



The prospect of closer co-operation between teachers and school advisers, based on mutual respect and trust as well as diligent work, may help strengthen teachers' commitment in supporting effectiveness and the pursuit of good standards.

### 8.1.2 Pre- and inservice teacher training

As has already been mentioned in Chapter Four, §4.3.4, Greek graduates of the Department of English are armed with a background of theoretical knowledge but do not become properly acquainted with the reality of the classroom before starting to teach officially. In order to help them cope in the first years of their career, it is recommended that:

- one full year be devoted to the pre-service training of young teachers.

Going by the assumption that *"a great deal can best be learnt by doing"* (Brumfit & Roberts, 1983: 155), Greek teachers of English must undergo a period in their education where they can develop skills and increase knowledge in a way that will enable them to operate effectively in the classroom and acquire professional attitudes of efficiency. Thus, in the preparation of young teachers it is imperative to develop a pre-service training program which should include some or all of the following items:

- reinforcement of the trainees' own **practical command** of the target language. Similar to playing a musical instrument, aspects of language proficiency such as pronunciation and vocabulary must be practised so that they can be kept in good form. Maintaining good levels of fluency would allow teachers to gain greater confidence and efficiency in their performance as 'specialists in the foreign language'.
- **school-based research projects**. This might include the completion of written work, perhaps done in groups, on topics relating to school life, school duties and educational objectives. Involvement in such work would offer an awareness of the conditions under which schools operate, insights into the various aspects of the working environment and how these could best be exploited to promote good instruction.

- visits to schools to partake in **lesson observations** and have dialogues with teachers about their work.
- **micro-teaching** in simulated classroom situations under the guidance of teacher-trainers, where trainees could disclose and clarify their own perceptions about teaching, and learn how to deal with preconceived expectations and stereotypes, how to monitor progress at different stages of foreign language study, how to apply various teaching techniques, how to make the standard assessment procedures (tests/exams) a useful part of the teaching/learning process, etc.
- **teaching for an extended period** (perhaps 10 weeks) at a school, with full responsibility in planning and doing lessons, followed by post-discussions with trainers or teaching staff.
- **assessment** of the trainees' performance and basic teaching knowledge by outside examiners (teacher trainers or regional advisers).

A program like the one described here would amount to a fairly intensive period of training and would require a close collaboration between the training institutions and the schools, if it were to run smoothly. While it may not be a 'piece of cake' in terms of organisation and realisation, it is well-worth putting into effect because it can bring a long-term benefit to the profession.

**In-service training** is particularly useful in the 'middle' years of teaching (i.e. roughly from year five onwards (Appel, 1995)), when routine and isolation set in. In enlivening the teachers' professional lives, it would be best to:

- hold further-training courses periodically at regional level, and annual meetings at national level from the outset.
- increase the number of participants as much as possible.

The responsibility for updating the teachers already at work is partly met through the work of the advisers (described previously in §8.1.1). However, in the task of further training, more ground may be covered by offering short courses (lasting two days to a week) which can be initiated and hosted by the regional departments of Education.

Of central concern in bringing practising teachers together should be to:

- introduce them to new ideas, acquaint them with language teaching literature.
- invite them to exchange personal opinions and advice regarding common experiences (e.g. personal fatigue and classroom misbehaviour),
- encourage them to reflect on their own and colleagues' practice and thereby reconstruct their perspectives on aspects of teaching such as role-relationships, gender equality issues, etc.
- stimulate them to critically discuss their views and refine their attitudes toward the implementation of existing or new language policies.

Bearing in mind that the in-service training of language teachers is indispensable, it would be essential to ensure that attendance is prescribed legislatively as an integral part of the requirements of the profession. Moreover, it is important that the courses are well-organised and announced well in advance, (so as to make it possible for the teachers to arrange administrative matters such as timetabling, financial assistance, leave of absence) and that they concentrate primarily on practical and current issues.

Any action taken in the above-mentioned domains would be a certain way of building further on the foundations being laid to improve state FL education.

## **8.2 Further research directions**

Research projects in Greece are undertaken by the Centre for Planning and Economic Research (KEPE) and the National Centre for Social Research Studies. Problems with staffing and funding have generally affected the variety and quantity of research done in these centres, while educational research in particular has been somewhat neglected (Altani, 1992).

More needs to be known about the relationship between the community and educational institutions. Also, studies must be undertaken in exploring specific pedagogical issues and their relationship to Greek society and the economy (Pesmazoglou, 1987), such as teacher and pupil expectations towards the teaching of

primary and secondary subjects in the curriculum, or the context and features of teacher communities. Other studies may focus on specific practical problems of foreign language instruction, such as the current quality of assessment procedures. The scope of such research must be extended to include rural as well as urban areas. Subsequently, it is important that the results of recent research studies are consulted for the purpose of planning and action, as for example, in teacher training schemes.

### **8.3 Limitations of the study**

Subsequent to the data collection and analysis (mainly as a result of time constraints, limited financial resources and setbacks in access negotiations), a number of issues regarding the potential limitations of the study arose. These issues and the manner in which they were dealt with are highlighted here.

#### **a) randomness and size of the sample**

A primary concern was to approach average schools where a typical, real-life view of the English lessons could be obtained and it is believed that this goal was achieved satisfactorily. However, the schools and teachers who were involved in the study were not entirely randomly chosen. While doing the fieldwork, I was compelled to abide by the school advisers' counsel. This means that I went to the schools that were suggested to me, on the understanding that they would roughly conform to my pre-stated criteria. Furthermore, I could only work with those schools and teachers who eventually agreed to go along with my research plan. In this sense, the sample can be designated as an opportunistic one whose 'randomness' was only partially fulfilled.

The size of the sample (11 classroom observations, 11 teacher- and 84 pupil interviews) is fairly small considering that a larger number of classes observed over a longer period of time could provide a much richer source of data on classroom life and the hidden curriculum. It must be noted that the timescales imposed by the research schedule as well as the teachers who became my subjects, made it difficult to prolong the fieldwork so as to collect more data, while the interviews with the classes had to be done within school hours and there was a limit to the number of

pupils that could be kept out of other lessons for my sake. Having said that however, I would argue that the sample has been adequate for the purposes of this study and the target population under investigation.

#### **b) range of issues explored**

The treatment of the various components and features of the object of this study has by no means been exhaustive. In a sense, both too much and too little data was used in the corpus of the thesis. Albeit a number of contextual and process variables (e.g. school and lesson features) were examined in detail and yielded a fairly lengthy document of analysis, some of the data that was collected had to be excluded from the study because it would have meant broadening the scope and exceeding the limits of the work. Thus, for example, not all the interview data was exploited fully, though the essential information relating to specific research questions was processed satisfactorily.

A part of the documentation gathered included samples of the most recently written tests as given by the teachers to their classes. An examination of the design and contents of the test papers was considered a useful way of detecting the kind of effort that was put into teaching and learning up to that point in time, in highlighting what the tests aimed to assess and what kind of cognitive demands were made of the pupils, as well as revealing the teachers' perceptions on language and language learning. However, the material did not fit neatly within the framework of the study and had to be left out<sup>56</sup>.

#### **c) reliability and validity**

In this study, reliability, the need for consistency in the research procedures over time (Weir & Roberts, 1994) was met by following a uniform procedure in the use of the observation and interview instruments. Both the observation schedules and interview instruments were pilot-tested<sup>57</sup> and were subsequently checked and modified. Care was taken to formulate interview questions that would be useful, concrete enough to yield relevant responses and free of bias, and the order of the

questions was changed so as to yield the most suitable form of responses. However, the option of securing 'intra-observer agreement', i.e. obtaining the assistance of a colleague to verify that the data is being treated consistently over time, was not open to the researcher as no other person was engaged in the fieldwork.

Measures were taken to safeguard the data from sources of invalidity, such as reactivity and the infiltration of subjective factors in the interpretation of the data. In particular, at the time of observations the researcher maintained a detached, neutral stance towards the participants and classroom events in an attempt to reduce the probability of bias and subjective appraisals as far as possible. Admittedly, however, it was not possible to fully prevent reactivity from occurring during the classroom observations, as some teachers were aware of my presence while teaching their class and made comments to that effect (teacher B) or watched me to see if I was following the lesson procedure (teacher A). The problem of subjectivity and bias was handled by triangulating the data and corroborating the findings with data from other sources. Thus, I sought to check my own observations or the teachers' statements with the other participants' perspectives and vice-versa. A further step taken was to ensure that the data is retrievable, by making copies of the audio-recordings and keeping the tapes as a permanent record, available for re-examination.

#### **d) generalisability of findings**

Two points need to be made concerning the question of generalisability: first, the documentary evidence that was gathered enabled me to survey the general developments in education, FL provision and the conditions of ELT pertaining to the broader context; and second, the study focused on classroom environments which were not subjected to any deliberate kind of control or manipulation (so as to allow for a cumulative understanding of the ELT situation based on the classroom proceedings and what the data itself could point to). Since the English language lessons were observed under ordinary, 'typical' circumstances, there is no reason to suppose that the findings are unusual or bizarre. Thus, while this study does not



claim to be a thorough, large-scale undertaking, it is felt that the findings can viably be generalised from the sample to the wider target population.

#### **8.4 Conclusion**

The quality of education provided determines how well the school system serves society, and what kind of investment is made in the future. Good teaching depends on good teacher-training which in turn must be informed by research in educational theory and practice. It is hoped that this study on ELT classrooms in Greek state secondary schools has been helpful by pointing to areas where action needs to be taken so that the scales may be tipped to bring about better classroom experiences and greater rewards than disappointments, for teachers and pupils alike.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> The reference here is about secondary schools that provide general or specialised instruction based upon at least four years previous instruction at the first level and which do not aim at preparing pupils directly for a given trade or occupation. Such schools may be called high schools, middle schools, lyceums, gymnasiums, etc. and offer courses of study of which completion is a minimum condition for admission to university (Unesco Statistical Yearbook, 1994: 3.8).

<sup>2</sup> The term 'evaluand' is used to refer to that which is being evaluated.

<sup>3</sup> Other methods include quasi-experimental designs, case studies, journalistic reports, etc. (Campbell & Stanley, 1963).

<sup>4</sup> Evaluation processes are also referred to as 'models' or 'approaches'. All three terms are synonymous.

<sup>5</sup> There are three basic operational terms in this model which also mark three phases of an educational program: *antecedents*, *transactions*, and *outcomes*. The term "*antecedents*" refers to any conditions existing prior to the instruction that may relate to the outcomes. "*Transactions*" refers to all acts or dealings that reveal the process of instruction, i.e. the interactions between pupils and teacher, pupils and fellow pupils, author and reader, etc. The third significant phase in this evaluation model is what results from an educational experience in terms of particular "*outcomes*" relating to the abilities, achievements, attitudes, aspirations etc. of the pupils involved (Stake, 1967: 149).

<sup>6</sup> A *concern* is understood to be "any claim, doubt, fear, anticipated difficulty, any matter of interest or importance expressed by anyone who is legitimately empowered to make a representation". An *issue* refers to any statement, proposition or focus that allows rational persons to present different points of view and express disagreement or conflict (Stake, 1975).

<sup>7</sup> A naturalistic enquiry implies that the range of constraints placed on the object being assessed is maximally restricted.

<sup>8</sup> The expression "mechanics of instruction" is used to refer to the patterns of interaction, specific teacher or pupil behaviour, classroom activities, aspects of classroom organisation, syllabus content and the cognitive and social demands made on the participants (Anderson & Burns, 1989).

<sup>9</sup> The point of departure for this hypothesis is that comprehensible input promotes acquisition of the target language, following Krashen (1982). Krashen (1985) and Ellis (1990) maintain that input is made comprehensible when the pupil is exposed to simplified language, is provided with contextual information, and makes use of knowledge of the world and his/her existing IL knowledge.

<sup>10</sup> Ellis (1990), for example, cautions that interactional modifications and negotiations of meaning may support language acquisition when the pupil is actually attending to them and is not feigning comprehension.

<sup>11</sup> As has been pointed out, the studies that have shown that interactional modification facilitates acquisition have done so only indirectly.

In a process-product study focusing on input and interaction, Seliger (1977) found some support for the claim that by initiating interaction, pupils gain more from the input that they receive in return than those who are less active in this respect. The six 'high input generators' of his study displayed high correlations between their initiated interaction and their final aural comprehension scores and grammar scores. He also found that the measures of classroom behaviour and the pupils' quantified self-reports on interaction in the FL were congruous. Chaudron (1988) however, questions Seliger's

findings, since a similar study conducted by Day (1984) with a larger population sample and a narrower scope of measurement, showed inconclusive results.

Counter-evidence for this hypothesis is also provided in Slimani's (1987) study, who concluded from pupils' own reports on their "uptake" (i.e. the items they claimed to have learnt after each lesson), that her subjects did not benefit from their own clarification requests.

A number of other theoretical doubts that have been expressed with respect to the value of interactional exchanges; include the speculations that:

(i) conversational interaction may facilitate communicative performance, but not acquisition of *new* linguistic features,

(ii) that negotiation of meaning may be feigned, and therefore not lead to comprehension of the function and use of TL items,

(iii) that conversational adjustments may be made by the interactants for reasons other than achieving comprehension,

(iv) that interactional exchanges may inhibit the pupil, particularly when they become complex.

(v) Finally, it is pointed out that because of its social nature, interaction becomes a vehicle for the display of convergence and solidarity between the participants involved, and as such does not necessarily contribute to second language acquisition (Aston, 1986).

<sup>12</sup> AT has been related to experimental research, primarily in the domain of SLA. The application of accommodation analyses has enabled the investigation of questions such as FL interactional variation, native speakers' perceptions of non-native speakers and the effect that these perceptions tend to have on the interaction (Coupland. *et al.*, 1988).

<sup>13</sup> Philips (1972) first coined the term "participant structures" to refer to the rights and obligations of participation with respect to who can talk and when in any social event, and indicate how verbal interaction between teacher and pupils is arranged (in Johnson, 1995: 41)

<sup>14</sup> Although it yields an indirect form of interaction, reference to the textbook is an essential part of the teaching/learning process as it too provides information in the target language (which may need to be explained, clarified, discussed, etc.), thereby extending and increasing the opportunities for teacher-pupil collaboration. In this sense, the textbook functions as a 'third participant'.

<sup>15</sup> In these schools, initially the main subjects taught were language and religion, the two subjects that effectively served the ideal of bringing the young up to be "*good christians and patriots*" (Kitsaras, 1957:38). Gradually however, subjects such as Philosophy, Rhetoric, Mathematics and Chemistry were added to the program.

<sup>16</sup> This method was originally developed in England by Bell and Lancaster, implemented in India and adopted by the French. It is said that the Bavarian regency translated and implemented the French School Law *verbatim* for the organisation of the Greek public school system (Kitsaras, 1983).

<sup>17</sup> Herbart (1776-1841) advocated the implementation of five steps in teaching: preparation, presentation, association, systematization, and application, aimed at finding the ways of organising ideas that will facilitate their recall when needed. Preparation, or revision of old material, would entail recalling material relevant to the learning task. Presentation would be aimed at imparting new facts. Association would be essential in building concepts and connecting them with the old. Systematization would involve a recapitulation of facts and generalizations. Finally, application, or practice, would test the transferrability of the new materials to new situations (Ebel, 1969). With the exception of step 5, these steps made up the typical lesson pattern.

<sup>18</sup> In the time between 1910 and 1929, Greece was marked by great political disorder and suffered severe blows with the occurrence of the Balkan war (1912-13), the First World War (1914-1918), the revolution of the Military in Thessaloniki (1916), the Micrasian Catastrophe (1922) and the Dictatorship (1925-26).

<sup>19</sup> The basic principles of Montessorian pedagogy were embraced with enthusiasm: to treat the child with love, care and attention in the early years of its education; to allow the child freedom to be active, to use its own creative energy, and to encourage the child to express itself and develop its own personality from within.

<sup>20</sup> During the 1960s and 1970s many OECD countries introduced wide-ranging innovations in their schools both in the content and methods of teaching, as part of a sudden growth and change in the industrialised societies. In the reviews of the curricula, particular emphasis was placed on:

a) encouraging pupils to discover facts and think for themselves, to define problems and issues and work for solutions

b) incorporating a variety of approaches, combining individual assignments, group work and other pedagogical procedures designed to engage pupils' interests

c) fostering active pupil expression and creativity.

These three target-features continued to inspire progressive classroom practice in all countries. (Skilbeck, 1990: 12, citing Connell (1980))

<sup>21</sup> The concept of a centrally controlled system can be traced back to the Bavarian plan for the development of the Greek educational system (1830s). Additionally, the Greek Orthodox Church exerted pressure upon the then governing parties to ensure that society be ruled closely by the Church and the State (Theodoropoulou, 1992).

<sup>22</sup> Pre-primary schooling is available for toddlers in state and private nurseries. The proportion of children at pre-primary level for the year 1990 was 55% net (UNESCO Statistical Yearbook, 1995). Nursery classes are held for a few hours per week for children between four and six years of age.

<sup>23</sup> The Greek equivalents are *gymnasio* and *lykeio*. The suffix *-o* in these nouns indicates the singular, while the suffix *-a* indicates the plural. E.g.: one *gymnasio* but two *gymnasia*.

<sup>24</sup> Additionally, by law it is possible to establish musical or athletic secondary schools in certain cities (Government Gazette, 1985).

<sup>25</sup> A new stream has recently been introduced which prepares pupils for Communication and Media studies (Tsinouka, K., personal communication).

<sup>26</sup> The initials AEI stand for the term *Anotata Ekpaideutika Idrimata*, i.e. institutions of higher education. The Greek government has founded three new institutions, namely, the Aegean, Ionian and Thessalian Universities and has offered special support to departments such as the Fine Arts, in order to support regional development (Karma, *et al.*, 1988).

<sup>27</sup> Today French is taught in 15% of all secondary schools.

<sup>28</sup> This document was supplied by the school advisers' office in Patra as a photocopy. There was no note of the original source attached.

<sup>29</sup> According to curricular 763/17-12-93, the following course books were approved by the Ministry of National Education and Religion for use in all schools:

New Generation, Books 3 and 4, Heinemann Publications.

Challenge Intermediate, Challenge Upper Intermediate, Nelson Publications.

Exploring English, Cassel Publications.

Thinking English, Cassel Publications.

New Cambridge English Course 2 and 3, Cambridge University Press.

<sup>30</sup> The unemployment rate for teachers in 1992 was higher than that of other professions (quoted in Kanellopoulos, 1996: 71).

<sup>31</sup> My enquiries during the course of the field work revealed that, in a class of say 30 pupils, 28 acknowledged that they attend a *frontistirio* (private institute) where they take English courses.

<sup>32</sup> For example, in 1987 the number of candidates for the FCE exam was 45 785, and CPE was 8 814 (Durrant, 1993: 23).

<sup>33</sup> Over the past ten years the adequacy of such a minimal qualification has been seriously questioned in debates between the State and the various associations. It has been suggested that the "*eparkeia*" (certificate of adequacy) be either annulled, or that the CPE certificate holder be required to attend a certain number of university courses in didactics, linguistics and pedagogy, in order to acquire a theoretical background of teaching. To date, these issues are still under discussion.

<sup>34</sup> Bex and Peponi (1992) set themselves the task of establishing to what extent the communicative approach has influenced teaching practice in Greek private language institutes. They designed a questionnaire which was sent to ten *frontistiria* in the Athens area and which compiled information on various features of their operation including the numbers of staff employed and their qualifications, availability and use of resources, class size, lesson organisation, classroom methodology, and pupil motivation. Through the responses received, Bex & Peponi found that teaching is generally heavily text-book reliant and dominated by traditional and formal instructional modes (ibid: 19-20). Teachers appeared to handle the communicative approach clumsily, finding it at odds with their own experience and practice. As a result of their research Bex and Peponi concluded that in their majority teachers are "*struggling unsuccessfully to teach English according to a methodology in which they are largely untrained and in principles in which they have little faith*" (ibid: 7). They called into question the applicability of CLT in social settings which have their own particular rules and conventions of educational practice, and argued in favour of a plurality of approaches and methods which would take the respective social settings into account.

<sup>35</sup> The acronym PALSO stands for the "Panhellenic Association of Language School Owners" which is annexed to the Panhellenic Federation of Language School Owners.

<sup>36</sup> The Panhellenic Federation of Language School Owners was established in 1981. Its main concern is to protect and promote the common social, economic, and professional interests of all the *frontistiria* owners who subscribe to it. In its commercial flyer it claims to be "*the largest organisation of private education in the world ...which has satisfied its needs without any assistance from the state*". The federation campaigns for better recognition, less control of fees, recognition of its locally produced exam.

<sup>37</sup> One basic tenet of *Neuhumanismus* is that knowledge or truth must be shaped by the thoughts and views of our predecessors because the present and the future are built on the past.

<sup>38</sup> A measure of the rate of improvement in reading literacy from ages 9 to 14 has shown that German children make very high gains during the intervening five-year period. This indicator may be seen as a confirmation that the educational system "*positively influences reading development*" (OECD, 1995: 207).

<sup>39</sup> The Federal Republic of Germany consists of the 16 states of Schleswig-Holstein, Bremen, Hamburg, Niedersachsen, Mecklenburg-vor-Pommern, Nord Rhein-Westfalen, Hessen, Sachsen-Anhalt, Brandenburg, Berlin, Tübingen, Saxen, Rheinland-Pfalz, Saarland, Baden-Württemberg, and Bayern (Mohr, 1990).



<sup>40</sup> The secondary school was at one time also referred to as *Lateinschule*, when it constituted a place of preparation for theological studies and *grammar school* when ecclesiastical education, classical learning and the mastery of grammar were held in particularly high esteem.

<sup>41</sup> The syllabus is differentiated according to two levels, namely, Niveau I which encompasses the fundamental requirements to be taught in classes 7-10, and Niveau II which stipulates additional requirements in classes 7-10.

<sup>42</sup> Learning English Green line 4. 1989. Berlin: Ernst Klett Schulbuchverlag.  
Learning English Red Line 4. 1989. Berlin: Ernst Klett Verlag.  
English H4 Neue Ausgabe. 1988. Berlin: Cornelsen Verlag.

<sup>43</sup> The original excerpt is as follows: *"Das Schülerbuch bildet das Zentrum des Lehrwerks. Zweifellos kann man den Lehrplänen formal entsprechen, wenn man den Unterricht lediglich auf das Schülerbuch stützt"*.

<sup>44</sup> Ethnographic observation is associated with empirical enquiry into classrooms, and is conducted either by means of systematic quantitative or ethnographic qualitative measurement (Delamont & Hamilton, 1986; van Lier, 1988).

<sup>45</sup> Karastathi-Panagiotou (1987) conducted an empirical study in which she attempted to determine the extent to which the school system in general and the teachers in particular value and nurture creativity in the Gymnasium. She approached her research question by examining the structure and operation of the Greek educational system critically, by observing teaching in 9 public schools and distributing questionnaires to the teachers. Upon finding that the structure of the system and everyday classroom practice is largely traditionally-oriented and identifying a number of inhibiting factors linked to this state of affairs, she proposed a detailed conceptual model for a creative Greek Gymnasium.

<sup>46</sup> The work of Altani (1992) focused on the issue of gender socialization in the primary school. Specifically, Altani undertook to elicit teachers' reported assumptions about gender-specific behaviour and pupils' intellectual abilities. She then conducted classroom observations where she examined the different ways in which gender-appropriate behaviour is achieved through interaction patterns in the classroom. Altani further juxtaposed the reported assumptions with the findings from actual classroom practice and pointed to evidence of gender stereotyping and unequal opportunities in classroom interaction between boys and girls.

<sup>47</sup> At that point in time, I could understand spoken German quite well but my speaking skills were still underdeveloped.

<sup>48</sup> Without interfering with the wording of statements that were central and relevant to the questions asked, unintelligible talk, repetitions and gap-fillers were extracted from the accounts presented in the appendices, to provide a neater, more concise description.

<sup>49</sup> CHAT is the abbreviation for **C**odes for the **H**uman **A**nalysis of **T**ranscripts (MacWhinney, 1991: 1).

<sup>50</sup> COLT is an observation scheme developed by Fröhlich, Spada and Allen (1985), which was used to examine communicative aspects of classroom interaction and to measure the communicative orientation in the target language. The scheme was used in observations of a series of second language teaching programs with the aim of determining the communicative orientation of each program type. An additional purpose was to discriminate among different types of classroom and identify those factors which might contribute to learning (Rea-Dickins & Germaine, 1992).



<sup>51</sup> The identification of socioeconomic status was guided by the information given on parental occupation, following a three-level model of social-class stratification, using the terms: "*middle*" for professional and managerial positions; "*lower middle*" for clerical and skilled manual occupations; "*lower*" for semi-skilled, unskilled manual occupations. Clerical occupations tend to overlap between the last two levels (Field & Haikin, 1971).

<sup>52</sup> Karastathi-Panagiotou (1987: 100) maintains that "*...there is ample evidence to suggest that higher order thinking skills... are neglected in the Greek schools. With the emphasis on memory... higher order skills do not come into play because the pupil is not taught and is not asked to take this mass of information and to classify it, compare it, make inferences, draw conclusions and formulate hypotheses about it.*"

<sup>53</sup> In the case of my data, I concentrated on identifying the boundaries of turns in terms of other speakers' speech, while I counted a turn closely followed by a pause as an extended turn.

<sup>54</sup> Because the sample and the numbers dealt with were small, no statistical tests of variance were carried out in the analysis. The analysis carried out in the form of frequency tables and diagrams was essentially inferential.

<sup>55</sup> The 'setting policy' involves forming classes of a similar ability level on a particular subject (Creemers, 1994).

<sup>56</sup> It should be clarified at this point that the material was not incorporated into the thesis because it extended beyond the frame of the research. The results obtained from the analysis however, confirmed the findings relating to the lessons observations and the teaching procedure.

<sup>57</sup> The pilot study was conducted at Drummond Community High, Edinburgh.

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### **Personal Communication:**

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